

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post-Office, March 1, 1899, by Frank Tousey.

No. 472.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 7, 1908.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS ^{AFTER} THE BANK STREET BUNCH; OR, ROUNDING UP THE DOCK RATS. *By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.*



The situation had become serious for the Bradys. Bound in the water, they seemed to fall victims to the rising tide. Suddenly the man astern gave a cry and pointed to an approaching boat. Was it help at last?"

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CHAPTER I.

HE WANTED HIS BROTHER'S CORPSE.

It poured in torrents that February morning, and over on Governor's Island, the United States military station at New York City, it seemed to rain harder than anywhere else.

On the first boat over from the Battery came a freckled-faced, red-headed young man of nineteen or twenty.

He was poorly but neatly dressed.

About his shabby hat was a broad, new mourning band, and there was another about the sleeve of his well-worn overcoat in the modern style.

His eyes were red with weeping, and his whole appearance told that he was mourning for the dead.

Perhaps it was the first death which in his short life had been put directly up to him.

That is the time when it really does come hard.

There were but few persons on the boat, and all wore Uncle Sam's uniform.

Two carried heavily laden baskets and had evidently been to market, probably for some officer's mess.

This pair seemed to take a special interest in the youth who sat opposite to them in the little cabin.

At last one leaned over and said:

"Say, young feller, will it be Red Pat Padian, of the 82d, you're after?"

"Yair," replied the youth, in a subdued tone.

"You'll be his brother, I s'pose? You look like him."

"Yair. He was me only brudder. I didn't hear of his det till too late to ketch de last boat last night."

"So?"

"Yair. What ailed him, d' youse know?"

"No; I heered, dough, it was pewmonia. Red wasn't in my regiment."

"It's strange dey wouldn't let a feller know, and me his only relation."

"P'raps dey didn't have your address."

"I tought dey always kept de address of a soldier's nearest relatives or friend?"

"So dey do, but mistakes come sometimes. Mebbe dis was one."

Young Padian made no mistake.

Evidently he was disinclined to talk.

When the boat rounded up at the little pier on Governor's Island the soldier who had butted in asked the young man if he knew where he was going, and upon being informed that he did not, kindly directed him to the office of Captain Kochmann, whose duty it was to look after the island's dead.

Presenting himself at this office, young Padian was

obliged to wait for fully half an hour before the Captain put in an appearance.

"Why, that corpse was sent away last night," said Captain Kochmann, when the young man had introduced himself and made his business known.

"Sent where—to who?" cried Padian. "I'm his only relation. I tort—"

Here he broke down and began to sob.

Captain Kochmann began again.

"What's your full name?" he demanded.

"Daniel Padian."

"You say you are the brother of Private Padian?"

"Yair; his only brother. Me fader and mudder are bote dead. Dere warn't no sisters in our bunch. I'm de only relation he had on oit."

"Were you notified of your brother's death?"

"Sure."

"Where is the notification? Have you it with you?"

"You mean de letter?"

"Yes."

"Here it is."

Dan Padian produced a greasy, yellow envelope.

Captain Kochmann drew out the enclosure and, merely glancing at it, threw it back, with an air of importance.

"This is nothing at all," he cried. "I'm beginning to think that you are a fraud."

The young man's pale face grew red with rage.

"Say," he retorted, "don't you gimme no stiff like dat. I'm his brudder, an' I want me brudder's corpse!"

"But this letter is nothing. Let me look in the record book."

The Captain pulled down a big book and consulted it.

"Next of kin, father," he read. "Address, 560 Bank street, New York. Name, Patrick Padian. He was notified and here is his written order to deliver the remains to Molony, undertaker, No. — Greenwich street. They left here at four o'clock yesterday afternoon."

"Why, it's a lie! Me fader's name was Dan. He never lived in Bank street, but up in Irishtown all his life. He's been dead this six years."

"You go to Colonel Colton," said the Captain. "I can do nothing for you. Some mistake."

Nor could any one on Governor's Island do anything for the unfortunate young man, it seemed.

Colonel Colton proved to be absent on leave.

No one else knew anything about the matter.

The letter of notification which Dan Padian carried was just a scrawl.

It read:

"Dan Padian,

"No. — First avenue, New York:

"Your brother Pat, of the 82d, died yesterday. Better

look out for the corpse, unless you want it chucked into the bay.
A Friend."

And it was this anonymous missive which had sent Dan Padian over to Governor's Island that rainy morning in February, 19—.

It was just a poor, New York working boy against the red-tape system of a United States military post.

Of course, Dan stood no show.

He did what it was natural he should do under the circumstances.

It was back to New York and straight to Molony's undertaking shop on Greenwich street for him.

Here he found a strange state of affairs, which can best be described by detailing it just as it came to Dan.

Upon entering the shop he found two well-known ward detectives there.

He did not know the men nor their business, so he just blurted out about his brother.

He wanted his corpse.

Malony looked at him, curiously.

He was a big, red-faced fellow, whose dead father had been long established in this end of the old Greenwich village.

The wardmen looked him over and sized him up for just what he was.

But Dan did not relish the idea of thus being looked over and sized up by three men, and none of them with a word to say.

"Which of youse is de undertaker?" he demanded, fiercely. "Why don't wan of youse muts speak? Is youse all tonguetied? Me name is Dan Padian, an' I want me brudder's corpse!"

"I'm the undertaker," replied Molony; "but how do we know who you are?"

"Hain't I a-tellin' yer? Me name's Dan Padian. I work in de Twentieth street gas house. I'm respectable. I belong to Father Murphy's church, where I was confirmed. Youse can call him up on de telephone an' ax him about me, if youse don't believe what I say."

"Who sent you here?" demanded one of the ward detectives, John Barney by name.

"Sure I was sent here from Governor's Island. Dey told me dat me brudder's corpse was give to Molony, de undertaker, by the order of me fader, who's been dead these six years. Wot's wrong wit' it all? Wot game is dem blokes on de island tryin' to play on me? Me an' me brudder hain't nobody. Where's de money comin' in by foolin' me so?"

"Wait," said Barney. "I'll call up Father Murphy. All I want is to be satisfied that you are the brother of Private Padian, and you shall know all there is to tell."

He went to the telephone and soon had the well-known East Side priest on the wire.

The talk which followed was one sided, as heard by Dan Padian, and his undeveloped brain was incapable of making anything out of it.

"Well, what does he say?" he demanded when Barney hung up the receiver.

"He says if you are really Dan Padian you have your initials done in India ink on your breast. He gives you a good sendoff."

"Dat's so; so had me brudder. Want to see?"

"Better, to make sure."

Dan loosened his clothes, pulled up his shirt and exhibited the initials, "D. P.," done on his breast.

"That's all right," said Barney. "I'm sorry for you, young fellow. Prepare for a shock."

"Wot? I know Pat's dead. Wot shock can I get now?"

"This shop was entered by burglars last night. Your brother's coffin was broken open and the corpse stolen."

Dan turned deathly pale.

To think of his brother not buried in consecrated ground was indeed a shock, as the detective well knew it would be.

"But why wud dey do sick a ting?" he gasped. "We Padians, hain't no millionaires. Do dey tink dey can get money out of me, de blame muts?"

"It certainly can't be that," replied Barney. "Can you think of no other reason why this thing was done?"

Dan could not.

The burglary—if it could be so styled—had been skillfully conducted, and Undertaker Molony knew nothing of it until he came downstairs into his shop in the morning.

The shop was on a corner, and an entrance had been effected through a window on the side street.

Nothing else had been disturbed save the coffin of Private Padian.

This was found empty, and it was the undertaker himself who was responsible for the presence of the detectives, he having notified the police.

One point more came out in the talk which was now given to Dan.

Undertaker Molony had not opened the coffin.

A stranger had come to him and informed him that he was the father of the dead soldier and gave him a written order to bring the remains to his shop.

At the same time he requested him not to open the coffin until he called next morning.

The coffin had been received from the Governor's Island authorities closed, and the request was complied with.

The result was that Undertaker Molony was not in position to positively assert what the coffin had contained.

The affair got into the papers, but it was not of sufficient importance to command much space, except in the yellowest of the yellow journals, and as they saw no sensation in it, they did not follow it up.

Through his priest, Dan Padian put in a petition to the Army Department to have the matter investigated.

This was the last the gas house boy heard of it.

But, so far as he was concerned, the matter was settled, when, about two months later, the corpse of a young man was fished out of the East River.

There were no clothes upon the remains, which had evidently been in the water a long time.

Upon the breast, done in India ink tattooing, were the letters, "P. P."

The remains were taken to the Morgue and all undertakers were notified, as is sometimes done.

Molony notified Dan Padian.

The remains were past identification, except by the tattooing.

This satisfied Dan, however, and he claimed the body, which was duly buried in Calvary Cemetery.

Dan had found his brother's corpse!

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERY OF COL. COLTON.

A year passed and the unimportant mystery detailed in the preceding chapter had been forgotten by everybody, when it was destined to be revived by no less famous persons than the partners in the well-known Brady Detective Bureau of the City of New York.

Not that the Bradys knew of the matter at the time.

It never came to their notice until it bobbed up again in connection with a Secret Service case which they were ordered to take up by the Government bureau at Washington.

For, strictly speaking, the Bradys are Secret Service detectives, they have an arrangement with that bureau whereby their services can be commanded at all times.

Old King Brady, upon entering his elegantly furnished offices on Union Square that morning in February, 19—, found in his mail written orders for him to report at headquarters, Governor's Island, as soon as possible.

Young King Brady, his partner, was out of town, and Miss Alice Montgomery, the accomplished female member of the firm, had not yet arrived.

Leaving word where he had gone with his clerk, Old King Brady proceeded to Governor's Island, and sent in his card to General Brower, then in command, an officer whom he had never met.

Hence when General Brower stepped out of the private office Old King Brady could not be certain that it was he.

But the General knew the old detective at a glance, having often heard of his skillful work.

For Old King Brady's appearance is known to all who are familiar with his career.

And this because, when not in disguise, he invariably affects certain peculiarities of dress.

These consist of a long, blue coat, with brass buttons, an old-fashioned stock and stand-up collar, and a big, white felt hat, with an extraordinarily broad brim.

"Mr. Brady, be good enough to step this way," said the General, and he passed back into the private office, followed by the old detective.

"You come here on Secret Service orders?" said the General, seating himself at his desk.

"Just so. Have I the honor of speaking to General Brower?" replied the great detective, in his old-fashioned way.

"I am General Brower. We are up against a mystery here, and I am under instructions to furnish you with full particulars."

"And I have instructions to take the case right in hand."

"Well, to begin with, we shall have to get back," said the General. "A year ago there was a certain officer at

the station, against whom very damaging charges had been brought. Instead of bringing him directly before a court-martial, owing to the respect which had been entertained for him, the Secretary of War ordered an informal investigation, which was had, and the minutes of their work were carefully typewritten. The discoveries of the committee were so damaging that at the court-martial which would surely have followed Col. Isaac T. Colton would not only have been dismissed from the service in disgrace, but would certainly have been arrested. In some mysterious way, Col. Colton must have got wind of these discoveries, for he suddenly disappeared, and with him vanished the minutes and a number of books and documents of the highest importance to this department. Secret Service men were put on his track, but they failed to obtain any trace of him. That is the first section of your case, Mr. Brady. Has the matter come to your knowledge before?"

"Never," replied the old detective. "I never even heard the officer's name. Of what was he accused?"

"Of drunkenness, opium smoking, defrauding his creditors and other personal matters. In addition of selling Government supplies and pocketing the money and of receiving heavy commissions from firms who had to do with the building of our new barracks here on the island."

"Then it would seem that Colonel Colton must have been an all-around crook?"

"He certainly was. The evidence obtained against him was most damaging. If he had simply contented himself with running away, probably nothing would ever have been done about the matter; but the books he unquestionably stole are part of the records of this department, and their loss is serious. Now, for the second section of this case."

"Proceed," replied Old King Brady.

"About a week ago," continued General Brower, "our big storehouse here on the island was broken into at night and a large amount of goods were stolen, mostly of the junk order, such as copper, rope and similar things. Foolishly, as I see now, but one man was detailed to act as night watchman, and his patrol was outside the warehouse. He was set upon, gagged and bound, and was so found by his relief after the thieves had departed."

"Was he able to give a description of them?"

"Yes, he described them as a rough lot of young fellows of the dock-rat order; all but one, who engineered the affair and who let them into the warehouse with a key."

"And he was Colonel Colton?"

"You have guessed it right, Mr. Brady. The watchman persisted in declaring that the Colonel was the man. He certainly ought to know, for he is a member of the Colonel's late regiment, the 82d Infantry, and, of course, knew the man perfectly well."

"And this is all?"

"That is all. The matter was reported to me, and I reported to Washington. Orders came to place all facts in your hands. What were your orders, may I ask?"

"To report to you and act upon the information I should receive."

"And I have given you all I have to give."

"What is the name of this watchman?"

"He is Private Sheridan, of the 82d. I forget his Christian name."

"Can I see him?"

"Certainly. Shall I summon him here or shall we meet him at the warehouse?"

"Can it be arranged that we are alone with him at the warehouse?"

"Certainly."

"Then I should prefer to have it that way."

General Brower touched a bell.

A young adjutant appeared in answer.

"Have Private Sheridan, of the 82d, report at the warehouse within ten minutes," he ordered.

The adjutant saluted and left the office.

"We will go to the warehouse," said the General, rising.

And Old King Brady followed him outside.

"You fully credit the watchman's story?" he asked, as they walked.

"I do," was the reply.

"What is your private opinion of Colonel Colton?"

"I was not acquainted with him. In fact, we never met. But I have it from those who knew him well that he had sunk very low before the final break came."

"He was a gambler?"

"A heavy gambler, beyond all doubt."

"His age?"

"Thirty-one, I believe."

"Married or single?"

"Single."

"A thoroughly dissipated fellow?"

"To the last degree."

"Do you know anything of his family connections?"

"I understand that he was an adopted child, a foundling."

"And may have come from low stock?"

"It is so believed."

"Then, having fallen through drink and drugs, it is not strange that he should sink to his natural level."

"It so seems to me."

The warehouse to which Old King Brady was taken proved to be a very extensive affair.

General Brower took him inside and was showing him around when Private Sheridan put in an appearance.

He proved to be a man about forty, American born and of average intelligence.

Old King Brady took him in hand at once.

"Sheridan, what's this story about seeing Col. Colton on the night of the robbery?" he demanded. "Sure you have hit it straight?"

"Yes, sir. No mistake. I know the Colonel as well as I know me own brother."

"By sight, you mean?"

"By sight and to speak to. We were in the Indian war out in Arizona together and I was one of his bodyguard, sir."

"Then you know him?"

"Indeed I do!"

"How did he look on the night of the robbery—like a man who was drinking hard?"

"No; but his face was as yaller as a marigold, or a man wit' the jaundie."

"Was he shabbily dressed?"

"Not so bad. He didn't look as tough as the rest of them."

"How many in the gang?"

"Five, without the Colonel."

"Did they come up to the seawall in rowboats?"

"I s'pose they must have. I had no chanst to see."

"How did it all happen?"

"Why, I was on the other side of the storehouse, that is, the side toward Fort Columbus, boss. I was coming just along, when two of them fellers suddenly lep out around the corner of the wall and jumped onto me before you could snap your fingers. It's the disgrae of having let 'em do it what gets on me nerves; but they had me gun out of me hand and me knocked silly as quieck as a flash. Whin I came back to me sinses they were tieing me up."

"I see. And the whole six were around you?"

"No, only three and the Colonel. I seen the other three afterward, when I managed to roll over. That was after they started away for good. Sure up to that time a man was standing over me wit' me own gun and threatened to shoot me if I made a move."

"Then your face was away from the warehouse all the time they were carrying the goods out?"

"Yes."

"And you saw nothing of what they took?"

"Not a thing."

"What did Colonel Colton say to you?"

"Why, boss, I says to him: 'Colonel, an' is it yoursilf who would let these men kill me?'

"Shet up, you fool!" he says. "I'm no Colonel. You are mistaking me for some one else." But I wasn't, boss. Just as sure as we t'ree stand here, it was Colonel Colton an' no wan else."

"Did he remain with you while the robbery was going on?"

"No; he went away. I dunno where."

"Was anything more said after that?"

"Not a word."

"Did they carry off your gun?"

"Yes; that went wit' the rest. I never had such a thing happen to me before. I feel everlastingly disgraeed."

"This seems to be very direet testimony, General Brower," said Old King Brady. "I don't think we need detain Private Sheridan any longer."

The soldier withdrew, and they walked in the direction of the General's office.

"There can be little doubt that the man is telling the truth," Old King Brady remarked.

"So it seems to me," replied the General. "What do you propose to do?"

"We want to get some clew as a starter. There are mang gangs of dock rats flying about the river front. It looks as if the Colonel had joined one. Knowing the weakness of the warehouse, he led the raid. But which gang has he joined is the question."

"You know some of these gangs?"

"Yes. Think, if you know, did anything occur at the time of Colonel Colton's disappearance which has any bearing on this point?"

"I don't know of anything. Remember, I was not here."

"But you may have heard the circumstances of his disappearance."

"He simply took the boat for New York and never returned."

"But these books and papers which were stolen. Did he carry them away with him, or how?"

"That is the singular part of it. Several saw him go. All unite in declaring that he neither carried a grip nor any bundle."

"And when were the books discovered to be missing?"

"Next day."

"Then somebody else must have taken them, or perhaps they were shipped away."

"I cannot tell you."

"Did any box go off the island that day?"

"I don't know. The wharfsinger might be able to tell us."

"Is he the same man who had charge of the wharf a year ago?"

"That I can't tell you, but it is easily ascertained. Let us go to the wharf."

"Let me do the questioning."

"As you will."

"It is part of my business, you know."

"I understand."

They went down on the wharf, and Old King Brady tackled the petty officer who had charge.

"You are to answer any question this gentleman puts," ordered the General.

"How long have you been in charge here?" Old King Brady asked.

"About two years, sir," was the reply.

"Do you remember the day Colonel Colton disappeared?"

"Very well, sir. It was the 10th of February, a year ago."

"What boat did he go over on?"

"One o'clock in the afternoon."

"Did he have a bag, or bundle, or a dress suitcase with him?"

"No, sir. I am positive that he did not."

"Did any box or bundle leave the island that day?"

"Yes, sir; a corpse went out in a coffin."

"Whose corpse?"

"Private Padian, of the 82d."

"Did you note the address?"

"It was Molony, undertaker, No. — Greenwich street; but, sir, that corpse was stolen."

"What do you mean?"

Burglars broke into the undertaker's that night and carried off the corpse. A couple of months after they found poor Pat floating in the river, so the burglars must have chucked him overboard."

"That's all," said Old King Brady, and he turned away.

"This is singular," remarked General Brower, when they were well away from the wharf. "I never heard that before."

"I've got my clew, General," replied Old King Brady. "Why, what do you think?" was demanded.

"For a guess that the corpse of Private Padian went over the seawall and that in the coffin which was supposed to contain it departed the books and papers which are missing."

And certainly Old King Brady had been able to suggest a possible reason for the singular burglary at Molony's undertaking shop.

CHAPTER III.

THE BRADYS GO TO BANK STREET.

"It looks to me as if you had hit it off about right, Governor," said Young King Brady, next morning, when his chief finished relating his Governor's Island experiences of the day before.

Harry had just come in from Boston and the Brady Detective Bureau were holding a consultation in the office.

"And did you do anything further in the matter, Mr. Brady?" demanded Miss Alice Montgomery, who was present.

"No," replied Old King Brady. "I had other things to attend to yesterday afternoon. I thought I would make a clean up, so we could give our whole attention to this case to-day."

"And what are we to do first?" asked Harry.

"Question is, which particular bunch of river thieves are concerned in this business?" was the reply.

"We have the list of gangs in New York and Brooklyn."

"True, but our list is an old one, and it does not include Jersey City nor Hoboken, and, as you very well know, there are gangs of dock rats in each of those places. Then there are the coal thieves down at Bergen Point. They all have good boats. It by no means follows that this job was pulled off by a New York gang. Better let me interview this undertaker first, and we will see our way a little clearer than at present."

"And nothing for me to do in the meantime?" demanded Alice.

"Nothing for you to do in such a case at any time," answered Harry, emphatically.

Alice gave a derisive laugh.

"That's for Mr. Brady to decide," she said.

The fact is Harry is deeply in love with his fair partner and always opposes her mixing up in any case which has specially dangerous features.

But Alice seldom heeds his protest.

Although she certainly cares more for Harry than any one else, she has persistently refused to listen to any proposition for an actual engagement between them.

She is too deeply interested in her detective work to consent to tie herself down in any way.

And Old King Brady, who views everything from a detective's standpoint, usually sides with her.

But in this case it was just the other way.

"We can tell nothing about that at this stage of the game," he said. "Alice may prove most useful. Who can tell?"

"Stung!" laughed Alice, looking at Harry, archly. "Now will you be good?"

"Let us all be good and get to work," added Old King Brady. "While this case seems to offer little of interest so far, it may turn out to be just the other way, and—"

Just here the conversation, which had certainly reached its limit, was interrupted by a knock on the door.

It proved to be one of the clerks, announcing that a lady wished to consult the Bradys.

"Show her in," replied the old detective.

"Here may be work for you two," he added. "As for this case, I think I am perfectly capable of managing it alone."

The woman, who entered the office, was a short, stout, motherly looking person of perhaps fifty years of age.

"Be seated, madam," said the old detective. "I am Old King Brady, and these are my partners. What can I do for you?"

"My name is Mrs. Mundy," replied the lady, taking a chair. "I am housekeeper for Mr. Tunis Vanderberg, who lives on the Shore Road, Bay Ridge. Perhaps you may have heard of him?"

"I cannot say that I have," replied Old King Brady. "What is it that you wish?"

"Personally I don't wish for anything," answered Mrs. Mundy. "Mr. Vanderberg is a very old man—over ninety, in fact. He has lately received some letters which have been troubling him greatly, and he wishes to consult one of your firm about them."

"What is the nature of the letters?"

"That I don't know. Mr. Vanderberg is a very secretive man. He has not told me what the letters are about, but they have greatly upset him. He is very anxious to see one of your firm right away."

"It will be impossible for me to go to Bay Ridge today, and probably for several days; but my partner, Miss Montgomery, can accompany you now if you wish."

"I think Mr. Vanderberg would rather have a man. He hates women."

"Then it will be best for you to apply to some other agency, Mrs. Mundy. Miss Montgomery is at liberty, but Young King Brady and myself are fully engaged."

Mrs. Mundy looked troubled.

"I am sure that would not suit him," she said. "Mr. Vanderberg is a very peculiar person. My orders were to bring one of your firm. I cannot go elsewhere."

"Very well. Then it must be Miss Montgomery. You need not worry. She is quite up to her business. It may work out better than you think."

"Try me, Mrs. Mundy," said Alice.

And it ended by Alice going away with the housekeeper.

"And now what about me?" demanded Harry. "Why didn't you let me look up that case?"

"Because Alice can do it quite as well," was the reply. "You may be needed in this Secret Service business, so come along with me, and we will interview Molony."

And so the Bradys went over to Greenwich street and then heard the story told in our first chapter from Molony's own lips.

"This is singular business," said Old King Brady, who

succeeded in drawing out the undertaker fully. "Did you see that corpse which was taken from the river?"

"No," was the reply. "I was too busy to go to the Morgue at the time, so I sent my young man to look up that boy and tell him about it."

"Did your young man see the corpse?"

"Yes."

"I should like to talk with him a minute."

"Oh, he left me some time ago."

"Then that cannot be. Was it fully identified?"

"Yes; by the tattooed letters. Both brothers had their initials tattooed on their breasts. Dan showed me his, and my young man saw those on the corpse."

"That covers the ground. Now about that coffin which come over from the island. Do you imagine that it ever contained a body?"

"No, Mr. Brady; it never did."

"How do you judge?"

"If you had handled as many stiffs as me you would be able to tell. They leave their mark. I know by a dozen different things."

And Molony went into details, which fully satisfied the old detective on this score.

"Then this robbery had nothing to do with the corpse of Private Padian?" he said.

"That's what I think," replied the undertaker. "Them fellers wanted to get something off the island, and they done it that way."

"Did the Secret Service men who took up the case at the time come to you?"

"Yes, and I told 'em what I'm telling you now, but they wouldn't believe a word of it."

"Now, about this man who called on you. Any idea who he was?"

Molony said "No," but both the Bradys were too well used to this sort of questioning not to observe that there was something in his mind which he did not give out.

Shrewdly, Old King Brady allowed himself to be sidetracked, and passed to other matters.

"This address, 560 Bank street," he said. "There is no such number, of course?"

"No. It would be way out in the river."

"So I was thinking. Now, look here, Molony! Is there any gang of dock rats which hang out in this neighborhood? It seems to me that such a gang certainly put up this job."

Now this was the one question to which Old King Brady expected most difficulty in getting an answer.

"Oh, I dunno," replied the undertaker. "I was born here in the ward, Mr. Brady, and I have always found that I had enough to do to mind me own business. I know nothing about me neighbors' affairs."

"It is so easily learned that I shall not press you," replied the old detective. "The captain of the precinct will tell me, and I should not like to have to tell him that you refused me so small a favor; but, of course, it is just as you say."

Molony came off his perch at once.

"If you'll not mention my name—" he began.

"Not the slightest danger," broke in Old King Brady. "Nobody ever gets names out of me."

"Well, then, all I can tell you is that this is a pretty

tough neighborhood. There is a bad gang holding out around here. They call 'em the Bank Street Bunch."

"So? River thieves?"

Molony laughed.

"I don't believe it makes much difference to them whether they steal on water or on land," he replied. "I hear they have boats. I guess they'd steal the river itself if they thought they could sell it, or try to at least."

And again the undertaker chuckled, pleased at his own attempt at wit.

"Thanks," replied the old detective. "Now I won't ask you where these fellows hang out, nor what the names of any of them are, for I suppose you expect to bury every one of them, if you live long enough; but tell me, Molony, and this ends it, did the man who came to you and ordered Pat Padian's funeral look as though he might belong to the Bank Street Bunch?"

"To that or any other bunch."

"He was a tough?"

"An old one."

"Of course, you have no suspicion who he was, for if you had you would tell, knowing what serious trouble it is sure to get you into if it ever turns out that you knew and did not tell."

"If I knew I'd tell you, bank on that," replied the undertaker; and, after some further talk, the Bradys withdrew.

"The case is certainly plain enough," remarked the old detective, as he and Harry walked in the direction of Bank street; "but the trouble is we are working on clews a year old."

"That's the rub," replied Harry. "But I have a suggestion to make."

"Out with it?"

"Let me fix up as a tough and put in a night in this neighborhood."

"Cold work for February, boy."

"All the same, I'd like to try it."

"Do so, by all means. But let us go down Bank street and have a look. It is some years since I have been there."

They turned in from Washington street.

The street is but a short one, only three blocks long, in fact.

Thus No. 560 was an absurdity.

A few old residences still remain, but what the Bradys noticed that day was a plaster mill, a few carpenters' shops, a lumber yard and a yard where second-hand boxes were stowed.

Of course, there were saloons on the corners.

None of them were of the sort to attract a well-dressed man.

Yet the neighborhood had never been particularly noted for its toughness.

The detectives walked through to West street.

"This may be where the bunch hold out, but I hardly think they do business here, unless it is with that junkman," remarked Old King Brady.

He pointed to an old brick building on West street.

It was but two stories high, and all sagged down in the middle.

It looked as if it might fall at any moment.

Over the door was the sign:

"Patrick Devoy, Junk."

The sign looked as old as the building.

Outside was an anchor, a coil of heavy marine chain, two rusty stoves and an old blacksmith's portable forge. This was the bait to the spider's web.

The spider himself was supposed to be inside.

"The Bank Street Bunch may never have sold that fellow a dollar's worth," said Harry.

"If the bunch began business on Bank street you may be very sure that they have tried to sell him at some time or another," replied the old detective; "but, as you say, they may do no business with him now. Let us go inside and have a look."

They crossed the street and, coming up to the shop, Old King Brady tried the door.

Inside was a large enclosure filled with all kinds of truck, such as one finds in a place of this sort.

The room ran through to a yard behind.

There was no one in the place itself, but the door of a little office, where there was a stove opened and an old man, with a pair of badly bowed legs, came waddling out.

"Good morning," said Old King Brady. "What's become of Mike?"

"He knows the place," thought Harry. "It would be strange if he didn't, but, of course, he would never let on."

"Do you mean Mike Comisky?" demanded the old man.

"Yes."

"Arrah, an' he's dead these five years."

"So? I thought it might be that from the change of name. You are Mr. Devoy?"

"That's me. Is there anything I can do for yer?"

"No, nothing. I was just passing. I wanted to know if Mike was still alive."

The Bradys pulled out.

"That fellow is a rascal," said Old King Brady, once they were on West street. "But then it don't follow that he does business with the Bank Street Bunch."

CHAPTER IV.

ALICE MAKES A CONQUEST.

Alice found Mrs. Mundy a plain, common sense woman.

She informed Alice that Mr. Vanderberg lived quite alone in one of the old mansions on the Bay Ridge "Shore Road," which is one of the most beautiful spots in the Borough of Brooklyn, skirting, as it does, for nearly two miles the edge of New York Bay.

"Every one belonging to him is dead," said Mrs. Mundy. "I'm the housekeeper, and we keep a cook and a colored boy to run errands. It's a very lonely life for me, Miss Montgomery, I can assure you; but the old gentleman pays me well, and so I stay."

"Is he rich?" asked Alice.

"They say he is worth about a million, if you call that

being rich in these days," replied Mrs. Mundy. "He has the reputation of being a regular, old miser, but I must say he has always been very liberal with me. As for himself, he hardly eats enough to keep a bird alive; but he often says to me, 'Order what you like, Mrs. Mundy; I want all my people to have everything they need,' and he never disputes the bills."

"I should think he would need a nurse to take care of him," remarked Alice.

"No; he takes care of himself," replied the housekeeper. "He gets about the house all right, but he never goes out now. Most of the time he is locked in his room, and often when I knock it is five or six minutes before he'll let me in. I'm sure I don't know what he does in there, but I often think that he must have one of his big safes open when I come. He has three of them, Miss Montgomery. If they are full of money, he runs an awful risk."

"Does the colored boy attend him?" asked Alice, whose curiosity was aroused by the mention of these safes.

"No; he has never entered the room, as far as I know. When Mr. Vanderberg goes out he always locks the door. He never allows any one to enter but me, and I am under orders not to tell about the safes. Dear me, Miss Montgomery, you are the first person I have ever told outside of my own family; if he don't happen to receive you in his room I do hope you'll never breathe a word."

"Rely upon me," said Alice. "How long have you been in his employ?"

"It's two years now, and the cook and Jake, the colored boy, came since I did. I really know very little about the old gentleman, except that he belongs to one of the finest of the old Bay Ridge families."

"And they, I have heard it said," replied Alice, "are as fine as any in New York."

They rode through to Fort Hamilton, and turned back on the Shore Road.

Soon they came to the Vanderberg mansion, a large frame house, standing well back and completely surrounded by an extensive garden.

Alice saw that this beautifully located estate was worth a small fortune in itself.

Mrs. Mundy opened the front door with a latchkey and ushered Alice into a large parlor, which was well furnished in the style of long ago.

"How nicely you keep everything!" remarked Alice, surveying the old mahogany furniture and the portraits and old engravings upon the walls.

"I do my best," replied the housekeeper, evidently flattered; "but, my dear, I want you to understand it is no light task. The house is so large that it just keeps one sweeping and dusting all the time."

"I should imagine so. What a charming, old library you have in the rear, here. Mr. Vanderberg is a great reader, I suppose?"

"Never opens a book, Miss. He could hardly read much, his eyes are so poor. But I must tell him that you are here. Take a seat. He will probably come downstairs to you. He is no lover of women, so you must not be offended if he refuses to see you at all."

"I understand," replied Alice. "You told me that at the office, you know."

Mrs. Mundy was gone but a few moments. When she returned she looked despairing.

"It is just as I thought," she said. "When he heard that I had brought back a woman he flew into a fearful rage. He will not see you, I am sorry to say."

"It makes no difference whatever, Mrs. Mundy," replied Alice. "We care nothing for this man's business. It is only by the merest accident, because we happened to be a little dull, that you got any of our firm here. We confine ourselves almost entirely to Secret Service work."

"Well, I did my best, I am sure," said the housekeeper. "But you mustn't think of leaving, my dear, until you have had something in the way of refreshment. Just stop here and I'll make you a cup of tea, and see if I can't find a wing of a cold chicken or something. It's a shame to have put you to all this trouble for nothing."

And thus saying, Mrs. Mundy bustled away.

Alice walked into the library and looked around.

Here there must have been fully a thousand books ranged upon the shelves.

Alice began examining them.

She soon discovered that the collection constituted a very valuable library.

Between two windows overlooking the grounds was a large mirror.

As Alice stood examining one of the books she happened to raise her eyes and saw reflected in the mirror the face of an old, old man, whose white hair had that yellow tinge that comes only with advanced age.

She turned and saw him standing between the folding doors, staring intently at her.

His face was a mass of wrinkles.

It was impossible to form any idea of the man's character from such a face.

"Good morning," said Alice, restoring the book. "Are you Mr. Vanderberg?"

For a minute the old man did not speak.

Then, without attempting a reply to Alice's question, he said, in a thin, piping voice:

"You don't look like a fool."

"Thank you," replied Alice. "I trust I am not a fool."

"Most women are."

"You have but a poor opinion of my sex, sir."

"And for good reason. Are you married?"

"Not yet."

"You should be. Woman was born for marriage. But society is all twisted out of shape. Perhaps no one ever asked you?"

"Well, I can't say that, either," smiled Alice.

Nor could she with truth, for Harry has asked her to be his wife at least a dozen times, and, while Alice has never said "No," she certainly has never said "Yes," as perhaps she may some day.

"I suppose you think me personal," said the old gentleman. "In fact, I suppose I am; but you must excuse me, for I am an old man."

"I don't mind, sir. But are you Mr. Vanderberg?"

"I ain. Yon, I take it, are Miss Montmorency, the she detective of the Brady Bureau, who has come here instead of Old King Brady himself, whom I greatly wanted to see."

"I object to the term 'she detective.' Mr. Vanderberg.

If I am a female detective, at least I try to be a lady."

The old fellow gave a childish chuckle.

"And you think I am no gentleman when I call you a she detective," he said."

"Female would be a better word."

"I am an old man. I am ninety-four my next birthday. Forgive me, please?"

"Consider yourself forgiven, and pardon me for lingering in your house after your dismissal, Mr. Vanderberg; but Mrs. Mundy insisted that I should wait and drink a cup of tea."

"That's right—that's right. No intrusion. I wanted Old King Brady. I have heard so much about him. Why didn't he come?"

"It was simply impossible."

"Did he think I hadn't money enough to pay him?"

"Money had nothing to do with it. He is working on a case, therefore he sent me."

"And he might have sent a worse looking woman. Without meaning to flatter you, Miss Montmorency, I will say that you are the handsomest woman I ever saw."

It was getting to be hot stuff.

Alice hardly knew how to take this old gentleman, who called her down one minute and showered compliments on her the next.

"My name is Montgomery, and not Montmorency, Mr. Vanderberg," she said. "And as for my good looks, they have nothing to do with my skill as a detective. But that is nothing to you, since I am rejected."

"Yes, yes," chuckled the old fellow, who appeared to be rather flattered than otherwise. "But, look here! I've changed my mind. I suppose if I tell you this business you will consult with Old King Brady, and have the benefit of his experience?"

"Most assuredly."

"Well, that's all right then. Come upstairs."

"Can't we talk here?"

"No. Come upstairs. I never allow any one to contradict me."

"Very well. Lead the way; I'll follow," replied Alice. The unexpected had happened.

Even if nothing came of it, Alice felt a secret triumph in being able to prove her skill in handling the old fellow to Mrs. Mundy.

So as Mr. Vanderberg slowly toiled up the stairs, clinging to the bannisters, Alice followed.

He unlocked the door of a front chamber on the left of a wide hall.

"Step in," he said, standing back. You will be the first person who has entered this room, besides Mrs. Mundy and myself, since my daughter died, five years ago."

Alice passed in, and the old man followed her, closing the door behind him.

"Pardon my closing the door," he said, "but I am an old man and can't stand the draught. Be seated. Don't take that big armchair near the stove, that's mine; but any other. That's right; that's right. Look around. See my books, my pictures, my big safes? Behind here is my bedroom, the door of which is never opened. I spend my whole life in these rooms, and here I shall die soon. Just think! In six years I shall be a hundred years old. I can remember when everybody was still talk-

ing about the great Napoleon, and millions of people have died since then. Sometimes I think death has forgotten me. Well, I'm in no hurry. I wouldn't even mind getting married again if I could get as handsome a wife as you will make somebody some of these days."

"Pretty good for an old fellow, whom I was told was a woman hater," laughed Alice. "Am I to consider that a proposal, Mr. Vanderberg?"

"Well, no," chuckled the old gentleman. "I should have to think about it. But in case—"

"Of what?"

"That I should say consider it a proposal, then what?"

"Then I should promptly reply that you can't get me." The old fellow laughed until his sides shook.

"Wait until I show you what I have in my safes," he chuckled. "That will make you change your mind. No woman could resist their contents. But there, Miss Montrose, I am only joking, you understand that. Let the old man have his little joke. I wish it were true, and you were the girl, then I'd change my will in your favor. Ha, ha! But you are too old."

"What on earth is the old fool talking about?" thought Alice.

It began to look as if it was all just a matter of second childhood.

Then Mr. Vanderberg broke out again:

"Sit down by the fire," he said. "Draw up the table. Mrs. Mundy shall serve your tea here, Miss Montfort."

He tottered to the side of the room and pulled the bellcord.

Then, dropping into the armchair, he spread his hands out upon his knees and began chuckling and talking to himself, but in words which Alice for the moment could not understand, until, all at once, she perceived that he was talking in French.

"Smart woman; beats all I ever saw," he was saying. "Wish I was young again; but I must stick to business. She'll do. I'll give her the case."

These and other mutterings Alice caught on to.

Then, in a minute, there came a knock on the door, and Mr. Vanderberg's "Come in" brought Mrs. Mundy.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed the housekeeper, throwing up her hands. "Dear me, Miss Montgomery, I thought you had run away!"

CHAPTER V.

YOUNG KING BRADY WORKS IN WITH THE BANK STREET BUNCH.

Old King Brady and Harry pulled away from Bank street and went downtown to attend to other business, for the boards were not quite clear for the Secret Service case even yet.

It was decided that Harry should put his plans of prowling about Bank street that night in disguise into effect.

But the decision was amended by making it a "hard lucker" instead of a tough.

So, along about seven o'clock, Young King Brady,

dressed in a shabby summer suit and an old straw hat, might have been seen strolling down West Fourteenth street toward the river.

It was well that he had provided himself with extra underwear, or he would certainly have been a candidate for pneumonia, for the night was cold and raw.

Harry got as far as Bank and West streets, which was as far as he could go and keep on Bank street, and here he stood leaning against the wall of the corner saloon for some time.

But few passed in or out of the place, for the neighborhood at night is comparatively deserted.

One big, red-faced man, who looked as if he might be the captain or mate of some small river craft, eyed him as he entered the saloon and when he came out again, redolent with the odor of rum, he paused.

"Rather cold holding up the wall there, Johnny!" he remarked.

"It is cold," replied Harry.

"Had any supper?"

"No; nor no breakfast yet."

"Take this and go in and get your drink," said the man, and he handed out a quarter and hurried away.

Harry took the money and slipped around the corner.

He had seen no one enter the saloon who interested him any.

He thought he would try it on the corner of Washington street awhile, for here there was another saloon.

And between these two corners and the corner of Greenwich street, he alternated for an hour.

Certainly the Bank Street Bunch was not in evidence that night.

After eight Harry gave it up and went away, for he did not want to make his presence in the neighborhood too marked.

At nine o'clock he was back at his post again.

This time he did not see a soul on Bank street from Greenwich to the river.

It began to look as if the bunch might be a myth.

But soon he caught onto something which was pitiful enough in its way.

Two young men, much about his age and general appearance, came up the street on the other side.

They paused at the boxyard and one tried the gate in the high fence which cut it off from the street.

The gate yielded to his touch, and the pair passed inside.

Harry knew what it meant.

The boxyard was a roosting place for tramps, who were without the price of a bed.

And this on a cold night in February.

But the same thing can be seen at all the boxyards all along the West Side river front in New York any night in the year.

The watchmen not only wink at the practice, but provide hay, old carpet or other covering, and a nickel is the usual fee.

When the regular customers are all in the gate is locked, and that ends it for the night.

While he stood around that night Young King Brady saw five more tramps go into the boxyard.

But these were not the sort he wanted, and he began

to think his time was being wasted when, along about eleven o'clock, he made his fourth visit to Bank street, and there was something doing at last.

Young King Brady was now leaning against the boxyard fence, as here it was a little more sheltered from the wind, when he suddenly saw a young man, whose face was the toughest, but whose clothes were comparatively good, turn out of Washington street and start down Bank street on the other side.

The fellow looked across to the boxyard.

For the moment Harry thought he was going to pass on his way, when he suddenly turned abruptly and crossed the street.

"Say, wat's de matter wit' yer?" he demanded. "Is de gate locked?"

"What gate?" demanded Harry, in a surly tone.

"Wat gate? Why, de gate of de boxyard, to be sure."

"What about that?"

"Don't you roost in dere?"

"I haven't even got the price of that kind of bed. The watchman wanted a nickel. I didn't have it, so he chased me. If you want to cough up I sha'n't kick."

"I might cough up a good deal more than a nickel if I thought you were the right sort," replied the young man, looking suspiciously around.

"Oh, I'm any old sort. If you've got a job on hand why don't you say so?"

"Ever frisk a crib?"

"Sure."

"Hain't afraid of de bulls?"

"Not on your life. But you see how far down I've got, the sight of me is enough to make the bulls pull me in."

"You don't look to be a millionaire, dat's a fact," laughed the fellow. "Come across and have a drink."

"No."

"Why not?"

"It makes me sick. I'm just out of the hospital. I can't hold the booze on my stomach, that's all. I'm near dead."

And Harry looked it, for he had made up to perfection.

"Come across anyway," said the fellow. "I want to talk to you. Dutch Bill shall give you some clam broth."

And Harry followed the fellow into the saloon.

There were only two men inside besides the "bar-keep."

They were tough looking enough to belong to the Bank street or any other bunch, but Harry's conductor did not recognize them.

"Larry been in?" he demanded.

"No, he hasn't been here to-night," replied the bartender. "Want to see him?"

"Yair. Anybody in back?"

"No."

"I'm going in wit' dis bloke. Bring me a whisky an' give him some of your clam broth. He's on the water wagon."

They passed into a small back room, where the young man turned up the gas.

They sat down at a table, and for a moment the tough eyed Harry closely.

Young King Brady pretended to grow uneasy under his steady gaze.

"Say, I hope you'll know me the next time you see me!" he blurted out.

"I think I shall, and I think I know you now," was the reply.

"Well, and what do you know?"

Harry held his breath, for everything depended upon the answer.

If his disguise had been penetrated, then that ended it.

But no!

The answer was the other way.

"I think you are all right."

It was a relief.

"Well, of course, I'm all right. Why not? What did you think I was?"

"We have to be careful. What's your name?"

"Jack Davis."

"Where are you from?"

"Chicago."

"Been here long?"

"Only two or three days."

"Ever done time?"

"Now, say, what are you asking me all these questions for? You hain't even told me your name yet."

"It's Fritz Wasserman, an' dat's me true name. I'm asking these questions because you look as if you wouldn't mind making a little money and I can put you in the way of doing it. See? But only in case you are one of our kind."

"I want the money all right. See that head?"

Harry pulled off his straw hat. He wore no wig, and as he frequently has to wear one, his hair was cut very short.

"Just out?" demanded Fritz.

"Of Joliet."

"How long did you get?"

"Three years. I was with a bunch what frisked a pawn-broker's crib on North Clark street, if you know Chicago?"

"Don't. I never was out of New York; but that's all right."

"What's this job?"

"I'm not telling. If you want to take your chances with me and some others there may be a show for you; but I can't promise anything. See?"

The conversation had reached this stage when the swing door was pushed open and a young man of much the general appearance of Fritz came in.

"Hello, Larry! You're just the feller I want to see!" cried Fritz.

"Who's dat mut? Wat yer doin' here wit' a stranger?" replied the newcomer, eying Harry suspiciously.

"Well, look him over and see what yer tink," replied Fritz. "He's a slim Jim. I got him hanging about de boxyard without de price. Struck me dat we might use him, you know where."

"Come now, Fritz! Have you been firing off your mouth to a stranger?"

"Don't you try to make a fool out of me! I'm as ~~agey~~ as you are. We've got to get somebody to satisfy

his nibs. I tought dis feller might do. His name is Jack Davis. He's just out of Joliet. Jack, dis is Mr. Burns. Talk to him. He's de boss of our bunch."

Fritz pulled out a cigar, lit it and leaned back.

"I don't talk to nobody till I've had ~~a~~ ball," growled Larry. "Hain't you going to shout?"

"Shout for yourself. I've had my ball an' dis feller's on de wag."

Larry rang the bell and when the bottle came he turned down a full tumbler of raw whisky, which did not appear to affect him in the least.

This done, he put Harry through such a fire of questions as he had never experienced before.

And through this ordeal Young King Brady passed victoriously.

Larry put in another drink at the end, and then became quite chummy.

He pronounced Harry as probably all right, but, as he remarked sixteen or seventeen times, there was one point that had to be settled.

He declined to tell what it was, however, and it was noticeable that, in spite of all the talk the fellow made, he never dropped even a hint of the business in hand.

"Wat you going to do wit him to-night, Fritz?" he asked.

"I tort I'd let him bunk with me," replied Fritz. "How'd dat suit yer, Jack?"

"What's the use asking?" replied Harry. "Isn't it better than stopping on the street?"

"Well, den, youse go home," said Larry. "I'll go an' get de measure and come around to yer room."

"And if de measure's right it's a go?"

"Yep."

"O. K. Come on, Jack. We may chase you in de morning, but anyhow you'll be able to put in dis cold night in a bed."

They passed out, leaving Larry behind.

Harry expressed his gratitude.

"Oh, dat's all right," said Fritz. "I'm suiting meself, young feller, not you; but nothing may come of it, so don't get your hopes up. If anything does come of it, why, den, you get yer full share; an' whether you hang to our bunch or not after dat depends upon yourself."

They entered an old dwelling on Bank street, near Greenwich.

Fritz led the way to a small room on the top floor.

It was half of the original back chamber, which had been cut into two rooms by a partition.

It contained a bed barely big enough for two, and as Fritz was decidedly stout Harry inwardly shuddered at the prospect; still there was no help for it.

Fritz lit the gas and sat down on the edge of the bed, leaving Harry the only chair the room contained.

He began questioning him about Chicago and was still at it when Larry entered the room.

The crook produced a small pasteboard box, out of which he took three pieces of twine, each having attached to it a little label.

"Take off your coat and vest," he said.

Harry stripped to the old shirt he wore, thankful that he did not have to disclose the two comparatively new undershirts which he had on beneath it.

Larry then measured him around the shoulders with each piece of string.

Harry tried to get sight of what was scrawled on the labels, but the writing was so poor that he could make nothing of it.

"Will he do?" demanded Fritz.

"He's kind of wide for de first turn," was the reply. "But I tink he might squeeze troo. It would be wort while to try it on, anyhow. For de others he's all right."

"Den it's a go?" demanded Fritz.

"Yep, unless we see reason to change our mind," was the reply.

That settled it.

It was now after midnight and Larry pulled right out, leaving Harry to crowd into bed with Mr. Fritz Wasserman.

It was anything but agreeable, but Young King Brady did not care.

He felt certain that he had worked in with the Bank Street Bunch.

But had this particular bunch of dock rats anything to do with the Governor's Island affair?

That remained to be seen.

CHAPTER VI.

ALICE MAKES AN IMPORTANT FIND.

"Serve Miss Montgomery here," ordered old Mr. Vanderberg, getting Alice's name right for once.

Mrs. Mundy obeyed without comment.

The lunch placed, she retired.

While Alice ate Mr. Vanderberg dozed off in his chair. This gave Alice a chance to look about the room.

There was every indication of the collector here.

Many rare books were displayed on low, open shelves. Above these shelves the walls were occupied by glass cases containing stuffed birds, insects, prehistoric stone tools, old coins and the like.

But what was in the safes?

Alice wondered if she was going to learn.

Naturally she thought of diamonds, from Mr. Vanderberg's remark that no woman could resist their contents.

When she had finished her cup of tea Alice clattered the dishes, and the old fellow woke up.

"Are you through, Miss Montpender?" he croaked. "Don't you want something more? Are you sure you have had enough? Nobdy ever goes hungry in my house."

"Plenty, plenty," replied Alice. "Now, let us get down to business. Are you going to put your case in my hands?"

"I am, if you will do just as Old King Brady tells you to."

"I never do anything else, Mr. Vanderberg."

"Right, right. Now, then, read these letters and then I'll tell you all there is to be told. What I want is advice as to how to act. I want to do the right thing, but I don't want to be fooled, and the proposition is such an aston-

ishing one that, really, Miss Montover, I don't know what to do."

He opened the table drawer and produced three letters.

"They are arranged in the order of their dates," he said. "See what you can make out of them."

The addresses on the envelopes were typewritten and the letters bore the postmark:

"Wall Street Sta., N. Y."

The first read as follows:

"Mr. Tunis Vanderberg:

Dear Sir—The writer, once an intimate friend of your late son-in-law, John Denyse, who married your only child, Eliza, desires to state that he has discovered your granddaughter, Eliza, the child who was believed to have fallen into the bay and to have been drowned, fifteen years ago.

"The child, you will remember, had a red birthmark, which extended from the left ear a short distance down the back and there ended in the form of a dog's head.

"This makes identification easy. I can produce the girl. I can prove that she was stolen while playing on the beach, and did not die by drowning, as was supposed.

"For this I demand the sum of \$100,000, half payable upon the production of the girl, the remainder soon afterward and to be secured.

Address J. C. Tanner, care of Isaac Wenberg, No. — Broad street, New York. The name I give is assumed. It will be useless to question Mr. Wenberg about me, as you will find if you attempt to put detectives on my track."

Alice laid this letter, which bore no date, upon the table, and examined the envelope.

"Postmarked the tenth of last December," she remarked.

"Yes," replied Mr. Vanderberg.

"And what did you do about it?"

"Nothing at all. Read the next."

The second letter was postmarked January 10th.

It ran as follows:

"Mr. Vanderberg:

"Can it be possible that you do not propose to heed my letter? I tell you, sir, that there is no doubt that the girl I have mentioned is your granddaughter. Not only does she resemble her mother, whom I knew well, and bears the birthmark, but I can furnish the affidavits of the man who stole her off the beach and carried her away in a boat and also of one who saw him do it. Furthermore, the kidnapper, upon promise of indemnity, will come forward and personally testify. I will settle with him. The price I name covers all. I will further state that this girl is now an associate of criminals—low thieves! Do you wish her to remain in such a situation? If not better act at once. I am out for money, but at the same time I have not forgotten the kindness once bestowed upon me by Mr. and Mrs. Denyse."

"I do not wish to see their child deprived of her rights

or to grow up a criminal. Considering the well-known value of your estate, Mr. Vanderberg, I consider my demand very moderate. If you ask, am I also a criminal? I tell you frankly, yes; but I have not lost all sense of gratitude, low as I have fallen, nor am I without heart. I shall expect a prompt reply.

"Yours truly,

"J. C. Tanner."

"And what did you do about this letter?" demanded Alice.

"Nothing at all," was the reply.

Alice made no comment, but opened letter number three, which was postmarked February 10.

It read as follows:

"Mr. Vanderberg:

"You have allowed another month to pass. I no longer appear as a supplicant. I give you fair warning. The contents of your three safes are known to a desperate band of thieves. If you do not communicate with me within a day or two—I fix no limit—I drop this matter. I also withdraw my hand, which has alone saved you from robbery. Your house will be entered. Do you think you can survive the shock? Don't flatter yourself that, by attempting to guard your treasure, you can escape. These people have ways of their own of working, and only my hand has saved you these two months. You may fill your house with detectives, but still the job will be pulled off. You may remove your diamonds, but still the thieves will come, and when they find the treasure gone you can easily imagine what they will be likely to do to you."

"You old miser, hovering on the verge of the grave, save your granddaughter from destruction, restore her to her rights, or take the consequences!"

"Such is the advice of one who was once your daughter's friend.

J. C. Tanner."

"Now, Miss Monticello," said Mr. Vanderberg, as Alice laid the letter down, "you have read all three of those letters. What would you advise me to do?"

"What do you want to do yourself?" replied Alice. "If you had it proved that this girl was your granddaughter, do you want to leave her your estate?"

"Listen. I quarreled with my daughter over her marriage. I hated and despised her husband. I never even saw this child. Why should I give her a cent?"

"You have made your will, of course?"

"Why, certainly; long ago."

"And who gets the estate?"

"No matter about that. I might even conclude to marry again. Who can tell?"

Alice almost laughed in his face, and it was the look the old man gave her which made her do it.

"Tell me the whole story," she said.

"About the loss of the child?"

"Yes."

"All I know is she was lost. It was supposed that she fell over the bluff and was drowned in the bay. Eliza went mad over her loss, and threw herself into the bay one night while her husband was trying to stop her. He

couldn't swim and was afraid to go in after her, so she drowned. Later on he blew his brains out."

"Did they live in this house?"

"Yes. It belonged to her mother's estate. She had the use of it for life, after her death I moved in."

"Then you want nothing to do with this girl, even if she is your granddaughter?"

"Not only that, but I won't have anything to do with her; even if I actually knew her to be Eliza's child it would be the same."

"Then there is only one thing to do. Send these letters to the police, or hire detectives to guard your diamonds."

"Wouldn't have police or ordinary detectives in my house for all the world. They are all frauds and thieves. I should expect to be murdered in my bed."

"That's nonsense. Remember I am a detective. I am no murderer."

"You are different."

"Then, if you don't want that, send your diamonds to the safe deposit."

"Miss Mont-what's-your-name, I don't own a diamond in the world."

"Well, then, this man is misinformed?"

"Yes, but—"

"Well?"

"I'll show you what I do keep in those safes. You are the only person who has seen my collection in twenty years."

"You forget that I haven't seen it yet," laughed Alice.

"No, but you are going to," replied Mr. Vanderberg, rising.

He tottered to the nearest safe.

Slowly working the combination, he threw it open.

It contained many little drawers instead of compartments.

It was the same with the other two.

"Now step up and have a look, my dear," said Mr. Vanderberg. "Of course, you can't examine all closely; that would take too long. But you can get an idea."

He began pulling open the drawers, and exhibited to Alice a wonderful collection of gems, some cut, others in the rough.

They were of every shade of color. Many were clearly of little value, but others, especially the emeralds and rubies, Alice saw at a glance must be worth thousands of dollars.

"Not a diamond in the lot!" cried the old man. "Everybody has diamonds, hence I have none, for I want to be different from everybody else. Formerly I was a wholesale gem dealer in Maiden Lane. This collection was originally part of my stock in trade, but I have added greatly to it since. Do you suppose I want to lose this?"

"You want to lose neither your gems nor your life, Mr. Vanderberg. Something ought to be done."

"Then it is up to you to do it."

"I can report to Old King Brady or to the police."

"I won't have the police nosing around here."

"Will you accept any one Old King Brady sends?"

"Yes, if you will come, too."

"Do you want us to look up the writer of these letters?"

"Certainly."

"Very well. You shall have a guard to-night and until the matter is settled, and I will come also. Now, to identify this letter writer, who seems familiar with this house."

"How can it be done? I knew none of my daughter's friends made after her marriage."

"This furniture in the house, was it your daughter's?"

"It belonged to old Mrs. Van Brunt, on her mother's side. I never entered this house until after my daughter's death. Everything is undisturbed here, just as she left it, except the furnishing of these two rooms, and such slight changes as Mrs. Mundy has made. But why do you ask?"

"Because these letters are penwritten and in a very marked hand. If the writer really was a friend of Mr. Denyse and letters belonging to that gentleman are to be had here, it might be easy to identify the writer."

Mr. Vanderberg clapped his hands childishly.

"A great idea, Miss Montague!" he cried. "Really, you are a wonderful woman. There are lots of letters belonging to Denyse in an old secretary, which still stands where he left it. Just let me close these safes and we will see."

Mr. Vanderberg shut the safes—it was all he could do to push the heavy doors in place—and then led Alice to a handsomely furnished chamber across the hall.

Producing a bunch of keys, he opened a superb French mahogany escritoire, which looked as if it might be a hundred years old.

In the desk part were many letters stuck in pigeon holes, with which Alice immediately got busy.

And it was not long before she found one which seemed to her to fill the bill, and Alice is an expert in handwriting.

"I should say that the same hand wrote these two addresses," she said, comparing it with the envelopes containing the three letters. "Don't you think so, Mr. Vanderberg?"

"Really, I could not tell, my eyes fail me," the old jeweler replied.

"This envelope was postmarked in Brooklyn, sixteen years ago," said Alice. "Now to see by whom the letter it contains was signed."

"Fort Hamilton, June 10, 188—.

"Dear Denyse:

"Yours received. I shall take pleasure in dining with you and Mrs. Denyse on Sunday, as you suggest. My kindest regards to the good lady and a kiss for little Eliza.

Faithfully yours,

"Isaac T. Colton."

The same party wrote all four letters, declared Alice.

And she knew that not only had she made a valuable find in Mr. Vanderberg's business, but that she had also secured evidence which might lead up to the capture of Col. Colton, and thus help out the Secret Service case.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GATHERING OF THE DOCK RATS.

Alice got away from Mr. Vanderberg as soon as she could and hurried back to New York.

Instead of going by the bridge, she took the Hamilton Ferry, which landed her at the foot of Whitehall street.

From here she went around into Broad street and located the number where Isaac Wenberg was supposed to be.

It was one of the older buildings near Pearl street.

Mr. Wenberg kept a cigar store, it seemed.

Alice went in and tackled him.

He proved to be a very civil young man.

"Why, I don't know this Mr. Tanner at all," he said. "He has bought a few cigars of me, and comes in once in a while. Last December, I think it was, but it might have been in November, he asked if he could have his letters addressed here for a few days, as he was making a change in his business. I told him he could, and he has been in several times inquiring if there were any, but none ever came."

"Then you don't know anything at all about him?" said Alice.

"Nothing whatever."

"He is an old friend of mine. I am very anxious to get his address."

"Then the only way to do will be to leave your name with me, and whenever he comes in I will tell him that you were inquiring for him," was the reply.

But this, of course, Alice declined to do.

Mr. "J. C. Tanner" in his letter had told the truth. He was going to be a very difficult man to trace.

Alice now went to the office, but Old King Brady was out, and so was Harry.

Harry did not return, but later the old detective came in, and Alice, telling him all, showed him the four letters which she had brought away with her from Mr. Vanderberg's.

"The same writing, certainly," said the old detective. "The hand which wrote these later letters was not a steady one, but the curves and lines all tally. However, we can soon prove if Col. Colton was at Fort Hamilton at that time."

Old King Brady went to the telephone and called up General Brower.

"I have a clew, General," he said, "and in working it up I want to know if Colton was stationed at Fort Hamilton in the summer of 188—. Of course, I can call up the Fort, but they may refuse the information, so I must ask you to try."

The General readily assented, and a little later came the answer that Colonel, then Lieutenant, Colton, was at Fort Hamilton at the time the Denyse letter was written.

"And thus low has this man fallen," said Old King Brady. "We must take this Vanderberg business right in hand. I'll get Cassidy and Muller from the Central Office and send them down there right away, but I don't see the necessity of you going, Alice."

"Oh, I must," replied Alice. "The old fool would never receive them if they went alone. Do you know he as good as proposed to me? He hinted that if I would marry him he would alter his will in my favor and leave me all his gems."

"Indeed!" replied Old King Brady, dryly. "What's his age?"

"Ninety-four!" laughed Alice.

"Better accept him. He'll be dead in a year, and you can divide the gems between me and Harry."

"Thanks! You will wait a long time for your gems, if you expect to get them that way."

Old King Brady was successful in getting his police detectives and late that afternoon Alice set out for Bay Ridge in their company.

As for Old King Brady, he had arranged to take rather a singular step.

What it was and how it came about will be later disclosed.

When Harry awoke next morning, after about an hour's sleep, which came to him after daylight, he found Fritz up and dressing.

"You want to get on the move," said the crook. "You are going to take breakfast with me, and Mother Mullins don't like to be kept waiting."

"Who is Mother Mullins?" demanded Harry.

"Woman who runs this ranch," was the reply. "I get breakfast here always, but the other meals I pick up outside."

"Oh, you better leave me out," said Harry, who was anxious to report at the office. "I shouldn't want to sit down at anybody's table in my clothes."

"Aw, dat's nothin'," retorted Fritz. "Dere's worse dan you been here. Mother Mullins don't care."

So Harry dressed and they went down into the basement.

Here a table stood spread, with a dirty cloth and dirtier dishes.

There were two men eating beefsteak.

One was an out-and-out tough, to whom Fritz merely nodded.

The other was a man who attracted Harry's attention at once.

His face did not look like that of an old man, but his hair was snow white.

His skin had the yellow tinge of a professional opium eater—not smoker—and his hands being in a constant tremble bore out the idea.

Fritz bade him good morning, and called him "Mr. Brown."

He did not introduce Young King Brady to either of them.

They sat down at the table, and in a few minutes a young girl came in with the breakfast.

She was strikingly handsome, and attracted Harry's attention at once by her modest manner as much as by her pretty face.

Fritz bade her good morning under the name of "Liz," and tried to joke with her, but the girl had little to say.

Harry soon ceased to pay attention to her, as she passed in and out.

"Mr. Brown" interested him more.

"Could he be Colonel Colton?" he asked himself.

Of course, the yellow face suggested the idea.

But Harry knew that all this was mere guesswork, for there is more than one yellow-faced man in New York.

Still the suspicion was natural enough.

After breakfast Fritz insisted upon Harry going with him to a poolroom up on Ninth avenue.

Here they met a number of young toughs, and many games of pool were played.

It was no use trying to get away.

Harry made several efforts, but at last gave it up, for it was perfectly apparent that Fritz did not intend to let him out of his sight.

At last, about noon, two very tough looking specimens entered and had a long, private talk with Fritz in one corner of the room.

After they had gone Fritz came back to Harry and said:

"Come on, Jack! I've got a job on hand, and when dat's done we'll have a drink and go to dinner."

Harry assented, and they travelled back to Bank street and went down on to West street, where they entered Mr. Patrick Devoy's junk shop.

As they passed in the door of the little office opened and, to Harry's utter astonishment, who should walk out but Old King Brady, in a disguise suited to the place.

"Well, and what do youse want?" demanded the old detective.

"Where's Daddy Devoy?" asked Fritz, evidently as much astonished as Harry himself.

"He's not here," was the reply.

"When will he be in?"

"Not very soon, I don't think. He has been called to Philadelphia, some of his people are sick. I've got charge till he comes back."

Fritz looked greatly disturbed.

"I'll have to see him," he said.

"No, you won't."

"What do you mean?"

"That you can do business wit me just like you would wit him. Come inside till I show you."

Old King Brady led them into the office and shut the door.

"Do you know Devoy's writing when you see it?" he asked.

"I dunno as I do," replied Fritz.

"Dat's bad, but here's me authority. Look it over."

Scrawled upon the paper which the old detective handed out was the following:

"This is to certify that John Phelan has full power to do business in my name in my absence.

"P. Devoy."

Fritz handed back the paper.

"I dunno you, boss," he said. "I can't talk."

"Den keep your mout shut an' get out!" snapped the old detective.

"Will Devoy be here to-morrow?"

"No."

"Next day?"

"No."

"Blamed if I know what to do."

"I told you what."

"What?"

"Get out!"

"Say, boss?"

"Well?"

"You can buy goods, I s'pose, and pay for dem?"

"Av coorse."

"Well, I'll see."

"Better settle it now, or I mightn't be on hand wit de money when you come wit de goods. Are you wan of de Bank Street Bunch? If you are I've got full instructions."

"Well, I am. Did Daddy Devoy say anyting about sugar?"

"Sure. When's it comin?"

"Will you pay cash?"

"Arrah, bad luck to yez! Don't ax me dat again. Av coarse, I will. Don't I know what you are? Do you tink it's a detective what Devoy's left behind him here, you dock rat? You're a fool!"

Fritz not only took this call down in good part, but seemed rather pleased.

"I guess youse is all right, uncle," he said.

"Av coarse, I am!" retorted Old King Brady, laughing, harshly. "Sure I was uncle to de river byes before you was born."

"Den look out for de sugar to-morrow night."

"Devoy said it was to-night."

"No; to-morrow night."

"All right."

"You know the price by the bag?"

"Sure I know all about it, and youse will get yer money, just the same as if Devoy was here."

"Well, all right den."

"What time will youse be along?"

"Oh, it will be late. Half-past three, most likely."

"All right. I'll be on hand."

"Do you know any of de boys?"

"No; not on de West Side. I belong over on de East Side. Sure I've had to close me own place to help out me friend Devoy. But what about de boys?"

Only in case any of dem come in you are not to do no business wit dem."

"In sugar, you mean?"

"Yes."

"And why not?"

"Oh, I mean only for dis time."

"Oh, all right. But if dey ax me what name what shall I say?"

"Tell them that it's orders that de biz shall be done only troo Fritz."

"That's all right," said Old King Brady, and he sat down in a ricketty, old armchair and began to fill a well-blackened clay pipe.

Fritz pulled out, taking Harry with him.

Not even by secret sign had Young King Brady ventured to try to communicate with his chief.

"What can he be doing there?" he asked himself, but the answer was not to come then.

"Hope I done right," growled Fritz, after they got outside. "I don't like dealing wit strangers."

They went to a beanery on West street for dinner, and then back to the room.

Fritz declared that, as they had to be up all night, they must turn in and get some sleep.

And as Harry plainly saw that the dock rat did not intend to let him out of his sight, he could only comply.

And he actually slept, having been awake almost all the night before.

When he finally awakened Fritz was shaking him by the shoulder.

"Come, we have got to get a move on," he said.

Harry started up.

"What time is it?" he asked.

"Half-past ten," replied Fritz. "But we've got a thundering long way to go, and de tide's agin us. Get yerself dressed."

They left the house soon afterward.

Fritz hurried Harry down on West street, and a few blocks below Bank street they went out on an open pier.

Fritz only went a short distance when he leaned over the stringpiece and gave a low whistle.

There were two iceboats and an old barge tied up here, but there appeared to be no watchman on either.

Instantly an answering whistle was heard.

Then, from under the pier, between the barge and one of the iceboats, a rowboat shot out into view, which carried two men.

Between Fritz and the rower some thieves' jargon was exchanged, of which Harry, in spite of his long experience, could make nothing.

"Get down wit yer," said Fritz then.

Harry lowered himself and dropped into the boat, Fritz following.

They were pulled back under the pier, where they found two more boats, carrying two men each.

"Larry hain't came yet?" remarked Fritz, peering about.

"Naw," replied one of the men, "nor Brown, needer."

"Probably dey'll come wit Mr. Kelly," said Fritz. "Meantime all we can do is to wait."

CHAPTER VIII.

OLD KING BRADY TURNS JUNKMAN.

Old King Brady's presence in the West street junk shop was due to a combination of circumstances, of which the old detective certainly would not have been able to take advantage of if he had not hustled.

After Harry left to take up his long watch on Bank street Old King Brady remained seated in his library in the old house on Washington Square for an hour or more.

Ostensibly, he was reading the evening paper and trying to forget business, but thoughts of the Secret Service case would pop into his head.

At last he threw down the paper and, putting on his hat and overcoat, rang for his colored man of all work.

"Julius," he said, "I am going out for a while. I shall probably be back before ten, if any one should happen to call." And with that he left the house.

He went west and wound up at the Charles street station.

This was the hustliug.

Old King Brady was determined to find out what the police knew about Patrick Devoy, for the old junk dealer had been running in his head ever since supper time.

"Is Captain Ketchum about?" he asked the sergeant at the desk.

"Why, no, Mr. Brady; not just now," was the reply. "But I am expecting him in any minute."

"You think he is sure to come?"

"Positive. He has business to attend to. Two of our wardmen are out after a certain party, whom the captain wants to see."

"I'll wait," was the reply, and the old detective sat down by the stove.

Before he had waited fifteen minutes the captain, in full uniform, walked in.

He shook hands cordially with Old King Brady, whom he had known for many years, and inquired for his health.

"Never better. Hope you are well yourself," was the reply.

The captain put up a complaint against his stomach, and then asked Old King Brady what he could do for him.

"Lend me your ear for a minute," said the old detective.

"Certainly, for as long as you wish. Come inside."

They passed into the private office.

"I'm working on a case which seems to have brought me up against a lot of dock rats," began the old detective. "What do you know about the Bank Street Bunch?"

"Under that name I don't know any such organization."

"Oh, I would not assert that they call themselves that."

"I don't know any special bunch located on Bank street, except a lot of tramps, who sleep in the boxyard; but I don't suppose they are the same people every night, by any means."

"Then you know of no organized gang of toughs over there?"

"No; but the neighborhood is full of crooks and thieves. What is it all about?"

"A robbery of junk was committed on Governor's Island, the other night. A lot of valuable stuff was stolen from the storehouse over there. The thieves came in small boats. I have a clew, which is rather ancient to be sure, but it seems to locate these thieves in the neighborhood of Bank street."

"You just hold on a little. I may be able to help you. For some time past we have had our eye on a junk dealer located on West street, near Bank. To-night I have sent men to his house on Horatio street to bring him here. I want to put him through the third degree. There has been a lot of lead pipe cut out of a closed factory in that neighborhood, and there is reason to believe that this man Devoy bought it. We shall probably lock him up."

Old King Brady was inwardly triumphant.

He had struck in at the Charles street station just in time!

But if the old detective had remained in his comfortable library this golden opportunity would have been missed.

"That sounds well," he said. "Is it your intention to overhaul Devoy's place to-morrow?"

"To-night. We prefer to work at it after dark. We have reasons for not wanting the people in the neighborhood to know what we are about."

"I should greatly like to go with whoever goes there?"

"You can, of course. I am going myself. Have you a list of the stuff stolen on Governor's Island?"

"A partial list. There was a lot of sheet copper taken, among other things. I have the dimensions of the sheets, which are unusual."

"Then it ought to be easy to identify them. What was the clew that led you to Bank street?"

Old King Brady then began the story of Private Pandian.

"Oh, I know all about that," broke in the captain. "Two of my men had the matter in charge, Detective Barney and another; but they could make nothing of it. Singular business, to say the least."

Just then an officer looked in.

"They are here with Devoy, sir," he said.

"Good!" cried the captain. "I'll come right out."

"Want to be present while we put him through the third degree?" he asked of Old King Brady.

"No," was the reply. "I prefer that he should not see me. What I want is a chance to look over his place."

"You'll get it."

Captain Ketchum then passed out, and was gone some time.

When he returned he looked triumphant.

"I've got the sly, old rat foul, surest thing," he said. "We are going to lock him up."

"Permanently?"

"Until the Grand Jury can get in on the business."

"I have just been thinking of a scheme. If you people could just take your lead pipe and leave everything else in Devoy's place just as it is for a few days and myself in charge of it——"

"It would help you out?"

"Greatly, I am sure."

"Consider it done."

"Can the old fellow read and write?"

"I'll see."

Captain Ketchum returned in a minute with word that Pat Devoy could just sign his name, and that was all.

Old King Brady scribbled off the Phelan letter, which later he showed to Fritz and Harry.

"Get him to sign this," he said. "Think you can?"

"Easily," replied the captain. "He's as meek as a lamb now, and horribly frightened. But, all the same, we may not be able to hold him, for he has a big pull."

Once more the captain went on his mission and returned with the letter signed.

"He has no idea what it was about?" asked Old King Brady.

"Not the least," was the reply.

"Can you keep his arrest dark and any of the gang from getting at him?"

"Certainly. We expect to do that in any case."

And now Old King Brady accompanied Captain Ketchum, Detective Barney and another to Devoy's.

The captain went in plain clothes and Old King Brady disguised himself sufficiently to fool Harry, for they passed Harry on Bank street, and he merely glanced at them.

If he had looked closer he would probably have recognized his chief.

They had taken away Devoy's keys, and then entered the place, making a thorough examination of everything.

Captain Ketchum found his lead pipe, but the old detective failed to discover any part of the goods which had been stolen from Uncle Sam.

But Old King Brady had discovered something better, and that was an opportunity to get in touch with the junkman's customers.

He was on hand bright and early, provided with money enough to make a bluff at business and so disguised as to perfectly fit the part he proposed to play.

The morning passed without bringing results until Harry and Fritz came in.

The junkman employed no regular assistant, Old King Brady had been informed.

He also heard of a Greek named Pete, who occasionally helped the old fellow out sorting iron and so forth. Devoy, it seemed, handled few rags.

Pete looked in during the morning, and Old King Brady told him to come again in the afternoon.

The fellow was, of course, surprised to find a stranger in charge, and went away without saying much.

Others came and went, and then came Harry and Fritz, and the old detective caught onto the sugar scheme.

But from where was the sugar to be stolen?

That he had yet to learn.

He hoped Harry might come back and tell him, but the hours passed and Harry failed to put in an appearance.

At last Pete dropped in again, and Old King Brady put him to shifting a lot of old iron.

While the fellow was working he tried to question him, but he could not get much out of him, for the reason, probably, that he did not know much.

While they were at it the door opened and a dark, swarthy man, who was certainly not colored, came in.

"Who is that?" the old detective asked Pete, for he was with the Greek at the back end of the shop at the time.

"Dey call him Nigger Mike. He great, good friend of de boss," was the reply.

Old King Brady went forward.

"And were youse after wanting Devoy?" he asked.

"Yair. Where is he?" demanded the man, looking around.

"Nigger Mike" was a prosperous looking proposition.

He wore a fine, new overcoat and a diamond stud and rings.

Old King Brady thought he might be a Spaniard or a Portuguese.

"Devoy's gone away for a few days," he replied. "I'm in full charge here. Read this."

He displayed the letter.

Nigger Mike glanced over it so hastily that Old King Brady wondered if he could read English.

"Dat's bad," he said. "When he come back?"

"It may be several days. I can't tell. What you want?"

Nigger Mike seemed very doubtful, and looked around suspiciously.

Old King Brady patiently waited.

If he had been made up to resemble any one but a man of Pat Devoy's own kind he would not have felt so sure of gaining this fellow's confidence.

But his make-up was simply perfect.

Presently Nigger Mike began to question him as to how much he knew about Devoy's business.

The answers he received seemed to hardly satisfy him.

"I'm going to lose this man," thought Old King Brady. "I must play my only card."

"An' is it about de sugar?" he suddenly asked.

"Yair. Sure. When do I get him, to-morrer?" came back.

"A ten-strike!" thought the old detective.

"How do I know you are the right party?" he said, cautiously.

"I have de letter," replied Nigger Mike.

"Let's see it."

The man opened a greasy wallet.

From it he drew out a letter addressed to Mr. Mike Bragaza, No. — Duane street, in a schoolboy hand.

Now, as we should have previously mentioned, Devoy was a widower, who lived entirely alone in an old house on Horatio street.

Thus it was that no one showed any interest in his affairs, and Old King Brady was able to carry out his scheme.

He drew the letter from the envelope and read as follows:

"Mike: There will be sugar coming the end of the week. Manilla in mats off the bark Antelope. Better come around as soon as you can. D."

The letter was so badly spelled that we have preferred to give it in corrected form.

Plainly, Nigger Mike must have been here in answer to it before.

"It comes day after to-morrow," said Old King Brady.

"You will take it right away?"

"Sure."

"What time will you be along?"

"What time does it come in?"

"About three in the morning."

"I will be here with a truck at four. Shall I send the boxes?"

"Yes. When can you send them?"

"I'd like to send them to-day."

"Let them come right along."

And Nigger Mike departed, leaving the old detective another step ahead.

He was now most anxious to get out and see where the bark Antelope had unloaded, but he concluded not to desert his post.

Toward four o'clock Captain Ketchum in disguise looked in on him, and Old King Brady frankly told about his sugar discoveries.

While the captain was there a truck backed up and unloaded a lot of empty soap boxes from Mike Bragaza.

In these the sugar mats were supposed to be packed, Old King Brady thought.

"This ought to make strong evidence against Devoy," said the captain. "What are you going to do, let the job go through?"

"Try and head them off when they start to get the sugar," replied Old King Brady.

"But if they do get it, can you arrange to let me pull in the bunch at this end?"

"Yes, certainly. I shall want your help in any case," was the reply.

Nothing else of importance occurred that afternoon, and at six o'clock Old King Brady locked up his junk shop and went home.

There was no news from Harry, but he found a note from Alice, saying that she and her detectives, Cassidy and Muller, had put in the night at Mr. Vanderberg's, and that nothing had occurred.

CHAPTER IX.

OFF WITH THE BUNCH ON A JOB.

Harry and Fritz remained for some time in the boat under the pier before any one else came.

Then at last came a signal, and it proved to be Larry.

With him was a short, squat, red-headed fellow, who, when they got into the boat, was addressed by Fritz as Mr. Kelly.

This man Young King Brady did not recognize, but he soon was able to place him by listening to the talk.

Clearly, "Mr. Kelly" was a yeggman.

He exhibited some sticks of dynamite.

Equally clear was it that the blowing of a safe was in the wind.

Soon one of the boats pulled out.

Ten minutes later the one containing Harry and Fritz followed.

Larry and "Mr. Kelly" brought up the rear of the aquatic procession, which went trailing down the bay.

The boats kept well away from each other.

Harry wondered where in the world they were going.

At first he thought that Governor's Island might be the objective point.

But they soon passed that and kept on down the bay.

It will be remembered that Young King Brady knew nothing of Alice's operations, as he had not seen her after her return from Bay Ridge.

Thus it never occurred to him, as it otherwise might have done, that Mr. Vanderberg's house might be the objective point.

They passed Gowanus and worked down Bay Ridge way.

The rowers made remarkably good time, for they handled their oars with great skill.

And now Harry could only suppose that some gentleman's mansion on the Shore Road must be the place they were heading for.

They had passed Bay Ridge avenue, and were now running abreast of the road.

There was very little talking done.

Fortunately the night was not very cold, but even so

Young King Brady, being without an overcoat, in spite of the two undershirts, became thoroughly chilled.

He begged Fritz to let him take an oar, so as to warm up, and this request, refused at first, was finally assented to.

The oarsman whom he relieved, a fellow with powerful arms, complimented him on his rowing.

But after a little he took the oar again, informing Harry that they were "almost there."

At last, when they had nearly reached Fort Hamilton, they saw the first boat drawn up on the shore.

The tide was out, and Harry could see nothing of the two rowers, who had gone alone in that boat.

They pulled on further and then landed.

Here the bluff was about thirty feet high, and the beach was strewn with boulders and small stones.

"We want to get in under the bank out of sight," whispered Fritz. The whole thing is to keep from attracting attention."

So they all stood in so close to the bank that any one looking over the fence on top could scarcely have seen them.

"What's the lay?" demanded Harry. "Can't you tell a fellow now?"

"I'd tell you in a minute," replied Fritz, "but that's against the rules of our bunch. Larry's de boss, and wit a new one de rule is to let him do de talkin'. See?"

"Oh, all right. We must be pretty close up against de place we are going to frisk, so I tort mebbe you'd be willing to talk."

"Can't break de rule, Jack."

"I s'pose dère's some small hole for me to crawl troo, an' dat's why I was measured," laughed Harry.

"Aw, bite it off!" retorted Fritz. "You'll know all in good time."

They could see nothing of the third boat, and at last Fritz began to grow very nervous about it.

"Why in thunder don't they come on? What's keeping them back?" he snarled.

These and similar remarks he made again and again.

It was just about this time that they spied a man wrapped in a long ulster coming toward them along the beach.

Fritz grew interested at once.

"Now, don't you go to firing off yer mout wit dat feller about," he said. "He's wan of your high-toned blokes. A regler tuff. You wanter keep a still tongue, but, of course, answer any question he may ask."

As the man drew nearer Harry recognized the yellow-faced "Mr. Brown" of Mother Mullins's.

"Why, I see dat guy at de breakfast table," he remarked.

"I know," replied Fritz. "He's stopping at Mother Mullins's just now, but his right place is out of sight, if he ever gets back to it, which hain't likely."

"What's de matter wit his face dat it's so yeller? Jaundice, I s'pose?"

"Well, as it happens, it hain't dat, although one might suppose so. Dat feller drinks laud'num just like you or me would drink whisky. See?"

Again Harry wondered if this man could be Col. Colton.

And no wonder, for he advanced with erect carriage and a very decided military air.

"So you are here?" he said, passing the rowers unnoticed, and addressing himself to Fritz.

"Dat's what we are, boss," replied Fritz; "but Larry and Mr. Kelly hain't came."

"So I observed from the road, where I was watching," replied Brown. "What do you imagine is keeping them?"

"I wouldn't undertake to say."

"You know that they actually started?"

"Sure. I seen de boat."

"Well, in that case they will probably be along soon. Is this the slim Jim Larry was telling me about?"

"Yair; dat's him."

Mr. Brown looked Harry over, with the air of a man who was about to purchase a dog or a horse.

"Time was when I went where you are to go to-night," he said, "but I couldn't do it now."

Obeying Fritz, Harry made no reply. Nor did he ever know what was meant by this remark.

Fritz now drew the man aside, and they walked up the beach.

Harry saw Brown strike a certain large stone, which was embedded in the bank, with his foot.

Here they stood talking for some minutes, and it was while the conversation was going on that the missing boat hove in sight.

It came in lower down than either of the others.

The four men landed, and the boat was drawn up on the beach.

The two rowers got under the shadow of the bank, but Larry and "Mr. Kelly" came forward and, passing Harry, joined Fritz and Mr. Brown.

And now the attention of all four seemed to be particularly attracted to the stone, which they tried to pull out of the bank.

Harry began to understand.

More than one of these old mansions on the Shore Road formerly had sewer connection with the water front, which the wonderful growth of Brooklyn and the extension of its trunk sewers has rendered unnecessary in these modern days.

"They are going to send me through some foul, old sewer, surest thing," Harry said to himself.

Of course, it was apparent that the intention was to burglarize some house on the Shore Road. There could no longer be any doubt of that.

At last the four men seized hold of the stone, and after several attempts succeeded in pulling it out of the bank.

Larry got down on his knees and peered into the opening, which Young King Brady knew must have been revealed.

Fritz came to Harry in a minute and told him to come on.

It was just as Young King Brady had suspected.

There in the bank was a square, brick opening, which the stone had concealed.

Larry now took hold, and said:

"De time is came, Jack, for you to know what you are up against. See dat hole?"

"Sure," replied Harry.

"Well, dat's a sewer, and it leads up to de house we are goin' to frisk. See?"

"All right. It seems wide enough to let any of youse troo."

"So it is here. I tried it de other night," was the reply; "but up near de house it gets narrer, and takes a turn, which is too much for me. I measured it an' I've measured you, an' I tink you orter be able to squeeze troo. See?"

"I can try it, but what den?"

"Look here!" said Brown, breaking in. "At a certain point beyond the one Larry mentions that sewer comes in under the house. There you should find a ladder leading up to a trap door; at least it was there some years ago. When you lift the trap door you will find yourself in the cellar."

"An' you want to get upstairs and open de front door for us," broke in Larry. "Now you twig de whole game. Good for it?"

"Of course, if I can get troo dat hole," replied Harry. "But what if de cellar door is locked?"

"You must saw de lock out in dat case. Of course, you have done dat sort of work before?"

"Certainly."

"Well, get busy, den. You want to take your coat and vest off, of course."

"What about light? I can't go in the dark."

"Do you tink I'm such a fool as not to have provided for dat?" demanded Larry. "Here you are."

He produced one of the round, larger flashlights and a keyhole saw.

Harry peered into the sewer, dubiously.

There was no water running, but he did not relish the job.

What was he to do when he got to the end of his underground journey?

Let the burglary go on? He did not like the idea.

On the other hand, if he aroused the household he stood a fair chance of being shot for a burglar himself.

"Say, dis is a mighty risky business," he said. "I ought to know just what I'm going up against. Who's in de house?"

"Go wan and do yer job or I'll make you sick!" growled Larry.

But here Brown interfered.

"The young man is right," he said. "Certainly he ought to know what he is going up against. Listen, boy! You need have no fears. In that house there are only four people, an old man over ninety: a colored boy, who sleeps in the garret; a woman cook and the housekeeper. There is as little danger as can well be expected in an undertaking of this kind."

"An' if you Welch now you're a dead one!" snarled Larry.

"Who's talking about Welching?" retorted Harry, pulling off his coat.

He felt that he had made a discovery.

There could be no doubt about the house being Mr. Vanderberg's.

This, then, was what the old gentleman feared, and why he sent Mrs. Mundy to demand the help of the Bradys.

Of with his coat and vest, Harry, armed with his flashlight and keyhole saw, took to the sewer.

It was not as bad as he expected, for the drain had not been used for many years.

Still, it was a disagreeable job, for Harry had to crawl on his hands and knees up a steep incline.

At last he came to the turn mentioned.

It was all he could do to pass this point, but Larry had measured him correctly, and he did manage to squeeze through.

Beyond the sewer ran on a level for a few yards.

Suddenly it rounded out into a vault of some size, and here, as had been told, was a standing ladder fixed against the wall and a trap door overhead.

By this time Harry was pretty well out of breath, and he waited until he could recover his wind, when he grasped the rounds of the ladder and began to ascend.

CHAPTER X.

ALICE MAKES A BIG HAUL.

Old King Brady put in a quiet night, and, rising at four o'clock, prepared for an early start.

He was out of the house by five, having eaten a piece of cold roast pork and partaken of a cup of coffee made the day before.

But these minor inconveniences are nothing at all to the old detective.

What he expected to accomplish by this early rising he could as well have done later in the day by simply strolling down to the Maritime Exchange.

But the way Old King Brady reasoned was that later in the day he might want to be doing something else.

It is a matter of principle with this remarkable man to improve every minute of his time.

Old King Brady steered for the East Thirty-fourth Street Ferry, crossed to Long Island City, walked over into Kent avenue in Greenpoint and stopped at the first sugar refinery he came to.

This was the beginning of a long chain of sugar "houses," as they are invariably called around New York.

From here they occur at frequent intervals down to the Wallabout.

Old King Brady proposed to visit each one in turn until he found the bark Antelope, or at least where she had discharged her cargo.

It was not at this refinery, nor at the next, nor the next.

Nor do we propose to state, for certain excellent reasons, just where it was.

Enough to say Old King Brady finally spotted the place.

The Eastern Sugar Refinery, we will call it. Such is not the true name.

By the time Old King Brady got there it was nearly eight o'clock.

Going down to the foot of the street, which ended at the East River, the old detective tried to get a look at the crafts moored to the long, covered wharf in front of the yard of the sugar house.

There were two barks lying here, one on each side of the wharf.

And as these were the first vessels thus rigged, Old King Brady began to hope.

The bark on his side was the Susan and Alice, of Thomaston, Me.

What the other was he could not see, but what he did see was that she was moving.

"All he could see were her masts, for the long pier-shed intervened.

"Being towed out," muttered Old King Brady. "If she is only going downstream I shall soon get a view of her stern. Probably she is."

And so she was.

In a moment the tug came in sight, and the bark soon followed.

"And there was the name, Antelope, Calais, Me., astern.

"An old West Indian coaster," thought the detective. "Probably she has been sailing these forty years."

And now the old detective knew just what sugar house pier the Bank Street Bunch of dock rats intended to rob.

But his task was by no means done.

The employes of the Williamsburg sugar refineries are a very high and mighty set of people.

Old King Brady had no notion of letting himself be turned down at the office.

He immediately sought the ferry at the foot of Broadway and, crossing to Roosevelt street, went on to Wall.

Here he entered the main office of the Eastern Sugar Refining Company, and here on Wall street the name of Brady goes.

Old King Brady sent in his card to Mr. Douglass, the secretary, a man whom he slightly knew.

Of course, he was promptly admitted.

To this gentleman he stated the case.

"This is seribus business," said Mr. Douglass, looking much concerned. "We have been twice robbed by dock rats within a year."

"What about your watchman?"

"Why, the first time he was assaulted and quite severely injured. The river thieves tied him up and carried off eight barrels of sugar and some other stuff."

"And the second time he was tied up the same way—the watchman, I mean?"

"Yes. Did you know?"

"I guessed. Did he have a black eye or anything like that?"

"A black eye, I believe. You think it was faked?"

"Have you the same watchman now?"

"Yes."

"Then I have no doubt he is standing in with these dock rats. Clearly they have been tipped off as to when the Antelope will arrive."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Brady. I shall see to it that this mat sugar is removed at once."

"Do nothing of the sort."

"And why?"

"There may be more than one of your employes in the deal, Mr. Douglass. You want to get at the truth."

"Yes, indeed. But what would you advise? I will put the case in your hands."

"It is already in my hands. I am doing Secret Service work. It will cost you nothing to let me act."

"You shall do just as you please."

"Well, then, you want to see to it that your watchman is removed from the premises to-night."

"But, if he is in the game, how can that be done. I should not like to arrest him on such slight evidence. The man has been with us a number of years."

"Discharge him just at closing time. If he proves to be innocent you can reinstate him later."

"Very well. I can do that."

"And put me in his place."

"Certainly."

"Then that is settled."

"As I said before, I am only too thankful that you have put me wise."

Now, Mr. Douglass had not said that, but what he did say amounted to the same thing.

He instructed Old King Brady to call at the refinery whenever suited him, and told him who to report to, saying that he would telephone over, so as to make sure of co-operation there.

This accomplished, Old King Brady hurried to his office.

But before we follow his movements we must return to Alice, whom we left with her detectives at Mr. Vanderberg's house on the Shore Road, Bay Ridge.

The first night of watching in the big house brought no results.

Mr. Vanderberg was very nervous over the presence of strangers in his house.

He sent Mrs. Mundy three or four times to Alice, with the request that she wait on him in his room, and each time she came it was to make her solemnly swear that she would not give away the secrets of the safes.

As for the detectives, he refused to see them, and kept to his room until far into the night, when Alice, who had been given a comfortable room by Mrs. Mundy, could hear him wandering through the upper halls, opening doors and talking to himself.

As Mrs. Mundy had warned all three detectives that such was the old man's nightly custom, no one interfered.

Alice went to the office next morning and the male detectives also left the house.

But all three returned there the following evening at seven o'clock.

Mrs. Mundy had a good supper prepared for them, and they all sat down to it.

That Muller and Cassidy treated Alice with the greatest respect need scarcely be said.

Supper was scarcely over when Mrs. Mundy looked in.

"Mr. Vanderberg wants to see you, Miss Montgomery," she said.

Alice made a face.

"Again!" she exclaimed. "What does he want now?"

"The dear knows," replied the housekeeper; "but you better go. The old gentleman is wonderfully spry to-night. I never saw him looking younger."

Alice went upstairs and knocked on Mr. Vanderberg's door.

"Who is there?" piped the monogenarian.

"It is I, Mr. Vanderberg, Miss Montgomery."

There came a great fumbling with bolts and locks, and at last the door was opened.

"Come in; come in," said Mr. Vanderberg. "Sit down by the fire. I want to talk to you."

There was a peculiar look in his eyes.

Alice guessed what was coming.

"The old fool!" she said. "What nonsense have I got to listen to now?"

He closed the door, locked and bolted it.

Alice was on the point of protesting, but she concluded to let matters take their course, so she sat down by the fire, and the old fellow, dropping into his big armchair, began to talk.

"Well, you didn't catch any burglars last night?" he began.

"No; the night passed quietly enough."

"I begin to think it is all humbug. If they don't come to-night I shall send those men away. It is all nonsense having them hanging around here and running up a bill of expense on me."

"That is up to you, Mr. Vanderberg. Of course, we will go whenever you say the word."

"Not you, Alice. I don't want you to go at all."

"Mr. Vanderberg! This is familiar. I—"

"Hush! I know it. I have been thinking matters over. I want to make you a proposition, Alice. Now don't interrupt me. It will be worth your while to listen to what I have to say."

"Oh, goodness! Have I got to listen to his nonsense again?" thought Alice. "This is absurd!"

"You saw some of my treasures," continued the old man, "but you have only seen a very small part of my collection. Alice, I am worth between eight and ten millions, at the lowest estimate. I am tired of living in this big house alone with Mrs. Mundy, who bores me horribly. A good woman, faithful to her duties, but no brains."

"When you get your granddaughter you will have a companion," suggested Alice.

"But I don't want my granddaughter. Even if it is true, I don't want her! I hated her father. Her mother married him against my will. She shall never have a cent of my estate!"

"That would not be right, Mr. Vanderberg."

"I don't care whether it is right or wrong. It's my way. My will is made. It leaves everything I own to charity, but I am prepared to alter it to-morrow, Alice, if you say the word."

"But what on earth have I to do with your will, Mr. Vanderberg?"

"This. I want you to marry me right away. Do it and I'll alter my will in your favor, leaving you everything I possess. Now, don't say no in a hurry. Take time to think it over. I am ninety-four years old. You know what little chance I have of living to be over a hundred. Only six years, Alice, and then you will come into millions. I don't ask you to say that you love me, or even make the pretence of it, nor do I on my side. What I want is a companion, some one I can talk to; some one to look after me, as Mrs. Mundy cannot. My dear girl,

there are probably a hundred thousand women in New York who would jump at the chance I am offering you."

The old fellow had worked himself up to such a pitch of excitement that he fell back in his chair in a state of collapse.

Alice spoke very kindly when she replied:

"Mr. Vanderberg, you have paid me the highest compliment which a man can pay to a woman. I thank you, but I—"

"Don't say no, now!" broke in the old man. "Don't say no, now! Take time to think it over. Decide in the morning. Take the night to think it over, my dear! There will be nothing doing, believe me. It is all an attempt at blackmail. If you were as old as I am you would know."

"Very well," replied Alice. "I'll think your proposition over. Certainly I must thank you for the compliment."

She arose and moved toward the door.

"Don't go yet!" cried Mr. Vanderberg, getting on his feet. "Wait! I am going to make you a little present. It is the first time in many years I have given anything away. It—it may help you to make up your mind. Just wait!"

Alice stood back, and the old fellow tottered to the safes.

He opened the middle one and, pulling out several drawers, which he immediately closed again, he at last took one out altogether and laid it on the table.

It was simply filled with lovely rubies, from carat size downward.

"Rubies!" cried Alice's elderly admirer. "I imported these stones from Ceylon, years and years ago."

He scooped up a dozen or more and extended them to Alice.

"Oh, I don't want to take these, Mr. Vanderberg," Alice protested. "It don't seem right."

"It is right. Take them to oblige me."

And Alice yielded, as under the circumstances there was no good reason why she should not.

"Thanks, thanks!" chattered Mr. Vanderberg. "Have some more, won't you? Do take more."

"No more," replied Alice, firmly.

"Then wait a moment. That is only part of the present."

He returned the drawer to the safe and pulled out another.

This was full of emeralds, and he gave Alice ten beauties.

Next it was pearls, and these were of great value.

Alice got fifteen, which she felt sure were of immense worth.

In vain she protested.

Mr. Vanderberg would not listen, and twenty-five sapphires followed.

"There!" he exclaimed. "That will do for to-night. But, understand me, Alice, and I mean every word I say, you get them all if you will only say yes and become my wife. Now, good night! I have allowed myself to get excited, which is not good for me. I am going to be very quiet now. If anything should occur let me know after it is all over. I trust you fully, my dear! You are the brightest woman I ever knew. Think it over. Make

me comfortable for the few remaining years I have on earth. Then you will be rich and can marry whom you please."

He unbolted the door and let Alice out, immediately securing it again.

"A hundred thousand women in New York who would accept him!" thought Alice. "Yes, three hundred thousands, and perhaps more; but none of it for me. What would poor Harry say if he only knew of this?"

If poor Harry could have read her thoughts then it might have given him more encouragement than he had ever had in his long and persistent suit.

For, while Alice had never turned him down, she had never accepted him, being devoted to her business, and determined, for the present at least, not to give it up.

And thus Alice left this singular recluse, richer by many thousands of dollars—in gems!

CHAPTER XI.

THE END OF THE VANDERBERG BUSINESS.

If Alice, like most women, had been without a pocket, she would have been in a decided fix.

But Alice's dress was like Old King Brady's wonderful blue coat in a way.

In other words, as the saying goes, Alice had "pockets to burn," so she soon secured her treasures after getting to her room.

There was one pearl which was a perfect beauty.

Alice put its value at \$3,000 at least. Later she was offered \$3,500 for it by a well-known Fifth avenue jewelry firm, but she refused to sell, and she has it still.

"What did he want of you, my dear?" demanded Mrs. Mundy, coming into the library shortly after Alice came downstairs.

"Oh, just to talk," was the reply.

"It is most remarkable," said Mrs. Mundy. "As long as I have lived with him I could never get a dozen words out of him on any subject which did not directly concern himself."

"His talk with me directly concerned himself," replied Alice. "Probably that is why he kept it up so long."

The evening passed without alarm and nothing more was heard of Mr. Vanderberg.

Alice lay down from nine to eleven, sleeping most of the time.

Then she arose and went down to the library, where Messrs. Muller and Cassidy sat smoking, and announced her intention of taking her turn on the watch.

"You don't have to, Miss Montgomery," replied Cassidy. "This is no woman's job."

"It is my job, and you are only my assistants," persisted Alice. "That's the way it is going to be."

"We are just going to put out the gas and use only lanterns," said Muller. "I shall take up my place close by the front door and Cassidy will be at the rear door."

"I'll take the back basement door then," said Alice, "and, really, somebody ought to watch there."

So Alice lighted the lantern with which she had provided herself, and went downstairs.

But Cassidy would not have it so.

"Sit in the library, if you must sit up at all," he said. "I'll take the basement and Muller can watch both hall doors. I feel responsible for your safety. I can't have you sitting down here alone."

For the sake of peace Alice yielded and returned to the library, where she sat with her lantern alongside the chair.

And here Alice sat, and here at length she dozed off, to be rudely awakened by a sharp exclamation downstairs.

"Halt or I fire!"

Alice sprang to her feet, seized the lantern and rushed out into the hall.

There was something doing at last!

But Muller was ahead of her at the top of the basement stairs.

"Keep back, Miss Montgomery!" he breathed, and down he went.

Alice leaned over the bannisters and listened.

"And so you would have shot your friend?" she heard a familiar voice say:

"How was I to know you?" came the reply. "It's lucky you spoke when you did."

Alice ran downstairs, for it was Harry's voice she had heard.

But in the lantern light she hardly knew him, so clever was his disguise.

"Where on earth did you come from?" she demanded.

"Oh, I'm the advance guard of the burglars," replied Young King Brady. "I came through an old sewer and up into the cellar. When I struck the basement I found Brother Cassidy right on the job. It's a wonder he didn't put a bullet through my brain. But we must act quick. There is a bad bunch outside waiting to be let in."

"Suppose we let 'em in one by one and capture them as they come?" suggested Muller.

"It won't do. There are too many of them for that."

"How, then?"

"I don't think it is worth while to try to capture them all. I know where to put my finger on them; but there is one man, he with the yellow face, whom we want right now."

"Then we better open the door and go for 'em?"

"Yes, it would be best. I wish I could help you, but I can't. I must keep dark, for I may have to push in among these people again."

"Right. We'll do the job, Harry," put in Cassidy. "You stop with Miss Montgomery. We'll go out the basement way and skin around to the front. We will get your yellow-faced man, if we can. How about shooting?"

"That's up to you. This mob is the Bank Street Bunch, as tough a lot of dock rats as you can find anywhere. They are not to be handled with gloves, I can assure you."

"We are off!" said Cassidy, and he opened the basement door and looked cautiously out into the back area.

"Come upstairs, Harry," said Alice. "We must not leave the front of the house unguarded."

"I can twig nobody," breathed Cassidy. "Come on, Mul! Let's see what we can do."

And the pair crept up the area steps and disappeared around the corners of the house, each taking a side.

Harry locked the door.

"Don't come near me, Alice, for heaven's sake! Not until I have burned these clothes and taken a Turkish bath," he said. "I have had a dreadful time."

"But we must not talk now," he added. "Come on upstairs. What are they after here?"

"Why, Harry, this old man is a retired gem dealer. He has thousands of dollars worth of unset gems upstairs in three big safes."

"Oh, then that accounts for Mr. Kelly."

"Who is Mr. Kelly?"

"Bang! Bang!"

Shots and shouts were heard outside.

"By jove! I can't stand this!" cried Young King Brady, and, forgetting caution, he rushed to the front door, and, in spite of Alice's protest, threw it open.

Men were running down the road.

Harry dashed after them, and Alice followed.

Another shot was heard, and the lanterns of the two detectives flashed.

But around the house the coast was clear.

Harry and Alice ran on to the road.

They found Cassidy leaning on Muller, and a man lying in the road.

"By jove! I picked up a bullet in the arm," groaned Cassidy. "There were three of them at the door. They saw us coming, instantly fired and then chased themselves. They've gone down the bank beyond there. Guess I am not much hurt."

"They will take to their boats," said Harry. "Well, let them go. But what happened this man? Did you shoot him?"

"That's the strange part of it," replied Muller. "He lost his footing, somehow, and fell down. The revolver he carried went off of itself, and he never peeped after that."

Harry bent down and turned the man over.

"The yellow-faced man!" cried Alice.

"Col. Colton, U. S. A., if I know anything!" replied Harry. "Look to him, boys! He isn't dead!"

And Harry, jumping the low fence, ran out to the edge of the bluff.

Here he could see the three boats making time toward New York.

Three men had joined the group when he returned, and one was a policeman, who had been attracted by the shots.

"This man is not dead," he said. "What shall we do with him?"

"Take him into Mr. Vanderberg's," replied Alice, and, Harry assenting, this was done.

But life held little for the wounded man now.

It was plain when they laid him down in the hall that inside of a few minutes he would breathe his last, for he had been shot through the lungs, as nearly as Harry could make out.

"Officer," he whispered, faintly, attracted by the policeman's uniform, no doubt, "I want to make a dying

confession, or statement, or whatever you call it. Listen to me. Let these people bear witness."

"Go on," replied the policeman. "I'll take down what you say."

"I am Colonel Isaac T. Colton of the United States Army," breathed the sufferer, faintly. "Tell old Tunis Vanderberg that his granddaughter lives at No. —— Bank street, where she is known as Liz Mullins. The proof of her identity is in my pocket. I will tell——"

But he told nothing more, for with this Col. Isaac T. Colton gave a gasp and died.

Then Young King Brady made himself known to the policeman and secured the papers from the dead man's pocket.

Alice explained the situation to Harry alone.

"You keep those. Don't give them to the old man on any account," she said. "I will wake him now and tell him what has happened."

"Do it," replied Harry. "But, look here! I saw that girl. Can it be possible that she is heiress to all this old man's wealth?"

"I believe it," replied Alice. "Come upstairs."

They knocked on the door; they called; they knocked again.

At last, when it became perfectly evident that something was wrong inside, in the presence of all hands Harry and the two detectives broke in the door.

The old jeweler sat by the fire, with his head resting on his hand.

The middle safe was open, and so was the drawer containing the sapphires, which were the last gems he had given to Alice.

He must have died then and there, for the body was quite cold.

"Unfortunate girl!" Alice said to Harry later. "He has made his will and left all his big fortune to charity."

But this proved not to be so.

People do not always tell the truth when they talk about their wills.

And such was the unexpected ending of the Vanderberg affair.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Harry did not leave the Vanderberg house until nine o'clock.

There was the coroner to see and the treasure of gems to be guarded.

Harry summoned the police precinct captain, and put everything into his hands.

Leaving everything arranged, with Alice on guard, Harry hurried to New York and to the office.

Here he missed Old King Brady, but he found a note addressed to himself, telling him to call at the junk shop about two o'clock, so disguised that he could not be known.

Obeying this order, Harry turned up at Devoy's on time.

The place had been closed all the morning and Old King Brady had just opened up.

And now, of course, came a grand comparison of notes, for both detectives had a lot to tell.

Old King Brady said:

"I have been to the Eastern sugar refinery. To-night I am to go on the pier as a new watchman, and you, now that you have turned up, shall be my assistant. Captain Ketchum's detectives, in connection with the river police, will hover near the pier from midnight on, ready to swoop down on the dock rats when they put in an appearance, which will not be until after midnight, of course.

"There should be no trouble whatever in arranging an easy capture. I'll jolly the boys along, and you can give the signal if the police don't respond quick enough. Leave it all to me. No doubt some of the bunch will look in here during the afternoon, and we may get more particulars."

But none of the Bank Street Bunch looked in at Devoy's that afternoon.

Captain Ketchum did, however, and he and Old King Brady perfected their arrangements.

Of course, the captain had no jurisdiction over in Williamsburg, but his detectives, Barney and his mate, could go anywhere, and as the dock rats belonged in Captain Ketchum's precinct, Old King Brady was more than willing that he should have that much to do with the round-up.

During the afternoon Harry took occasion to run down to Bay Ridge again.

Here he found Mr. Bagley, Mr. Vanderberg's lawyer.

They had been searching for the old man's will, and could find none.

"I am certain he never made any, Mr. Brady," declared the lawyer. "Again and again I have begged him to do it, but he always refused."

"But he positively told me that he had made one," declared Alice.

"Well, if he did it was done outside of me," was the reply, "and I have had charge of his affairs for years. I say no will."

Harry drew Alice aside.

"Did you tell him anything about the girl?" he asked.

"Certainly not, since you asked me not to," replied Alice.

"Then don't until we can get Old King Brady free. We go after the Bank Street Bunch to-night and expect to round them up. I looked over those papers which I took from Col. Colton. They furnish absolute proof of this girl's identity. We will spring this sensation later on."

Harry now steered for Brooklyn, where he had supper at Duffy's famous restaurant, near the Borough Hall.

At seven o'clock he met Old King Brady at the Williamsburg end of the Broadway Ferry.

Both were disguised as workmen, but Old King Brady had the blue coat on under his overcoat, which proved to be a mistake.

They proceeded to the Eastern sugar refinery and were admitted to the factory office by the watchman in charge.

Old King Brady, giving the name of Owen Manin, and introducing Harry as his son, produced a letter which Mr. Douglass had sent to the office, ordering that they two be put in charge of the pier.

"An' what was de matter wit poor Tom Cronin?" the watchman demanded. "Why was he bounced all in a minute, like he was?"

"I know nothing about that," replied the old detective. "I only know that we were ordered to report here."

There was more of it, but finally the Bradys were taken out to the pier and the factory watchman, still in full possession of his grouch, went away.

They walked about the long, covered pier.

The Manilla sugar in mats was piled at the extreme end near one of the doors, which the Bradys promptly discovered to be unfastened.

With no expectation of seeing the dock rats before midnight, the Bradys were taken all-by surprise when, at a little after eleven o'clock, they were attracted by a slight noise down at the end of the pier, they being in the watchman's little office at the time.

They hurried out and saw a lantern coming toward them.

And there was real danger.

It was Larry and Fritz who came towards them now.

Both wore overcoats, and each had his hand in his pocket, suggestive of revolvers.

Old King Brady took the bull by the horns.

"Good evenin', gentlemen!" he called. "You'll be Tom Cronin's frinds? He towld me to look out for youse."

"Where's Tom?" demanded Larry, gruffly.

"Sure he was called away to attind a wake," replied Old King Brady, "an' me an' me son was put in his place. He towld me to luk out for de boys an' de sugar's handy. It was meself who lift the dure open for yez. See?"

"Well, you seem to know what you are talking about, old man. Come on down and show us what you'd sooner we'd take."

They were walking on towards the end of the pier, when suddenly four men sprang out upon them from behind some barrels, and the Bradys were promptly sandbagged.

It was the work of an instant.

When the Bradys were able to pull themselves together they were lying on the wharf, with their hands tied behind them.

Their overcoats had been taken, also their hats, and over their mouths handkerchiefs had been tied.

Nobody addressed them directly, but from the conversation which followed they learned the watchman had telephoned that he had been discharged.

The gang got busy at once.

First old King Brady was taken away.

Harry saw him dragged through the door by the pile of sugar mats.

At last his own turn came.

A rope was tied under his arms and he was lowered into a rowboat.

Larry and Fritz followed him down and they pulled in under the pier, where it was comparatively light, for an arc light burned in the refinery yard.

Here he found Old King Brady, waist deep in the water, and tied to a pile.

Harry's turn had come to submit to similar treatment.

He was lifted out, lowered into the water, and held in place by Larry and Fritz, while a third man, who he had never seen before, tied him alongside his partner to the pile.

"And now, Mr. Old King Brady," said Larry, when

all was accomplished, addressing his prisoners for the first time, "this puts the kybosh on youse. See? Youse tort youse was very slick, didn't yer? Dat's all you knew. Look! I know youse now. You pretended to be Paddy Devoy's friend. You may have fooled me partner here, but you didn't fool me. Paddy's arristed and you tuk his place and put up dis here job. All right. It's de last for yours. De tide's low, but soon it will be high; den youse drown, like a couple of rats! All right. Nobody's going to cry about it. I want youse to be found, so as to be a warnin' to other gumshoe men to keep away from be Bank Street Bunch."

Suddenly the man astern gave a cry and pointed to an approaching boat.

As they hung to the pile Old King Brady alone could see the boat.

The light was dim, but there was enough of it to enable him to recognize Detective Barney at the bow of a police launch.

The dock rats instantly pulled out.

In the hot fight which followed the Bradys were necessarily left out.

There were three police launches, and as the dock rats only had rowboats, they were all rounded up—seven in number—in the end.

And that night the Bradys and the police descended on Mother Mullins' crib, and rounded up six more.

No sugar was taken.

The watchman, Cronin, was arrested. So was Nigger Mike, and both confessing, they followed the Bank Street Bunch up the river.

The Bradys overhauled Col. Colton's room at Mother Mullins' and found the books stolen from Governor's Island; but no trace of the stolen junk was ever discovered.

Whether the books left Governor's Island in Red Pat Padian's coffin or not, was never known, but probably they did.

As for the Vanderberg business, it proved to be a case of no will.

The Bradys took the girl at Mother Mullins' in hand and saw her restored to her rights.

And so this young woman came in for millions.

For their work the Bradys got a fat check from the Eastern sugar refinery and another when the Vanderberg estate was settled.

From the Government came the usual fees.

And such was the outcome of the curious combination of circumstances which sent "The Bradys After the Bank Street Bunch."

THE END.

Read "THE BRADYS AND THE BOSTON BEATS: or, THE SECRETS OF THE OLD MANOR HOUSE," which will be the next number (473) of "Secret Service."

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ITEMS WORTH READING.

India possesses many fine highways, though this fact is not generally known. One of the best, which runs from Bombay to Delhi, is 900 miles in length. One of even greater length is that on the Afghanistan frontier, from Peshawur to Calcutta. These roads were built before the days of the railroad to serve as military highways. The native princes take pride in keeping them in repair. The automobilist in India is constantly surprised and delighted by the ease with which he may travel from one place to another.

Miss Jean Gordon, factory inspector at New Orleans, has brought charges against the proprietor of three factories. The law of Louisiana says that women and children in factories and stores may not be worked longer than ten hours. According to Miss Gordon's interpretation the ten hours include the one hour allowed for the midday meal, which would be practically but nine hours actual work. Miss Gordon intends to have the courts settle the question.

La Tribuna publishes a letter from the Mayor of Messarosa, who attempted, without conspicuous success, to deliver to Mlle. Louise de la Ramee, better known as "Ouida," the sum of \$2, subscribed by one of the readers of the paper. He learned that Ouida had of late frequently received large sums in cash and money orders from sympathetic admirers, and that on their receipt the woman invariably took the notes and money orders into the street in front of her cottage and destroyed them. At the end of the mayor's note the editor of La Tribuna adds a warning to Italians not to show generosity toward an ungrateful foreigner, since "charity begins at home and is usually best received there."

Two gold prospectors recently discovered in the Santa Susanna Mountains, about fifty miles from Los Angeles, Cal., the largest and most remarkable cave in western America. While looking for indications of gold they found an opening which they entered. The opening led to a great cavern, consisting of many passages, some of them wide but most of them narrow and lofty. The passages lead into great halls, some containing an acre, studded with stalagmites and stalactites, in some cases so thickly that it is difficult to get through. The walls of one of these halls are covered with rude drawings, some almost obliterated but others still clear. The drawings represent incidents of the chase, showing Indians on foot pursuing bear, deer and other animals. One wall painting shows the bear pursuing the hunter. The work is done with a soft, red stone much used by the Indians for the purpose.

Abraham Rosenstein, of New York, thus explains the remarkable rise in price of diamonds: "There are two factors

in this extraordinary rise. One is the syndicate connected with the De Beers mines; the second is the great demand in the United States for really good diamonds. The syndicate, composed principally of the directors of the De Beers Company, takes the entire output of the mines at a fixed price and sells the diamonds at any price it chooses. The syndicate has the whole diamond trade in hand. The great prosperity in America and the fashion of wearing a number of jewels account for the fact that four-fifths of the entire output of diamonds goes to the United States. The price has gone up 100 per cent in twelve years. Americans find buying a diamond a good investment."

WITH THE FUNNY FELLOWS.

"There's that fellow I refused. I'll bet he'll be sorry all his life that I didn't marry him." "Well, he hasn't any edge on me; I'll be sorry all my life, too, that you didn't."

Maid—Please, mum, the baby has gone and turned the jug of cream all over my best dress. Mistress—Never mind, Bridget, we can use the condensed milk.

Only Once—"We don't lynch a man often, anyhow," remarked the visitor from Iowa. "Neither do we," volunteered the man with the Southern accent; "never, in fact, but once."

"A financier is a man who makes a lot of money, isn't he, father?" "No, Freddy; a financier is a man who gets hold of lots of money that other people make."

"By the way, Jinks, can you pay that hundred I lent you last week? I just lost all my ready money at bridge." "Look here, Binks, I hope you don't think I'm going to pay your gambling debts."

Dying Magnate—At this solemn moment I want to transfer to you a great trust— Pastor—Hush, hush, my dear sir! At such a time you should be turning your thoughts heavenward, instead of trying to unload on an unsuspecting minister of the gospel.

"I gave you a dime, and you went immediately into a saloon," remarked the benevolent old gentleman. "Don't you know it is very wasteful to spend your money for liquor?" "I've often thought of that, sir," replied the weary wayfarer, "but I've never yet found a place where I could get it for nothing."

Speaking with a young lady, a gentleman mentioned that he had failed to keep abreast of the scientific advance of the age. "For instance," he said, "I don't know at all how the incandescent electric light which is now used in some buildings is produced." "Oh, it is very simple," said the lady. "You just turn a button and the light appears at once."

A small boy was asked to take dinner at the home of a distinguished professor in Princeton. The lad's mother, in fear lest he should commit some breach of etiquette, gave him repeated directions as to what he should and should not do. Upon his return from the great occasion the mother's first question was, "Harold, did you get along at the table all right?" "Oh, yes, mamma, well enough." "You are sure you didn't do anything that was not perfectly polite and gentlemanly?" "Why, no—nothing to speak of." "Then something did happen. What was it?" "But I fixed it all right, mamma." "Tell me at once." "Why, I got along pretty well until the meat came, but while I was trying to cut mine it slipped off on to the floor. But I made it all right." "What did you do?" "Oh, I just said, sort of carelessly, 'That's always the way with tough meat.'"

A STRANGE CUSTOMER.

By KIT CLYDE.

"Believe me, madam, I think you put too much belief in these letters."

The lady's only reply was a quiet shake of the head and a contemptuous smile.

Her father, Captain Fairlight, had come of a good family, and was well off. He was not a bad sort of a man, but he had two great failings—drink and the turf. Nothing could keep him from either one or the other. If anything could have done so, it would have been his little daughter Effie—the lady I have mentioned; but she had not the power, poor child—she was too young. She was scarcely fifteen when he died.

One morning the captain started for the Derby. He was then worth at least ten thousand pounds. On his return home he was very much the worse for liquor, to say the least of it, and was a beggar.

For a few days he was hurrying from place to place trying to raise money.

Then came a very ugly affair. Two forged bills were presented and paid at a bank. The supposed acceptors repudiated them. The drawer was Captain Fairlight, but he repudiated them. I was put onto the work, and I managed to prove the captain's innocence. The plant had evidently been made by some of the betting men, who, knowing all the parties, had been able to work the thing thoroughly. The man suspected was Tom Ingelow. Why he was suspected more than some others I can mention I cannot make out, unless it was that he suddenly disappeared.

Captain Fairlight was almost delirious with delight, drank deeply, returned home and fell dead.

But the girl Effie Fairlight, his daughter—what was to become of her?

She did not let the grass grow under her feet, but off she went to Madame Barnel, who had one of the finest millinery establishments in the West End, and where her father had spent many pounds for herself and mother. She saw madame, and after telling her all, asked for an engagement as a needlewoman. She was taken on, and proved herself so clever with the needle that soon she became a kind of forewoman—much to the horror of her proud relations—and later on manageress.

Madame Barnel died. A year afterward Effie married old Monsieur Barnel—a man four times her age. He died, and she became the absolute mistress of one of the most lucrative businesses of the West End.

Such was the lady it was my business to call upon, and who had placed in my hands some anonymous letters of a very unpleasant nature.

"Tell me, madam," said I, "the story of your second marriage"—for she had been caught by a wily American.

"There is nothing much to tell," she said, shrugging her shoulders. "Mr. Lytton had letters of introduction to me from America, and, strangely enough, as they were purely business letters, called with them at my private house in — street, instead of my business place.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but my excuse must be that I am in a hurry. I have to start for Manchester to-night on a large cotton transaction."

"Of course I excused him. The order was a good one, and I accepted it gladly. It was executed, and the cash paid at once. More orders came through the same source, and all payments were regularly met. This naturally threw me a great deal in the way of Mr. Lytton. I—well, I suppose I loved him. I was lonely, and when he proposed I married him."

"Now, my dear madam," I said quietly, "I know when you

married you had every penny of your money fixed down upon yourself. I know that you are a thorough woman of business, and I speak to you now in that capacity. Do you think your husband had anything to do with that forged bill?"

"No, no—I do not, but I think some of his people have. I don't know his relations or connections. Remember that. He came from America, a stranger to me. I don't know why—I was all alone, and I married the man. I suppose I did a foolish thing."

"But let me thoroughly understand what you want. Firstly, you want those forged bills traced?"

"No, these letters. They must be seen to before anything. I will have them explained."

"Now these letters have come all within three months?"

"Yes."

"And you do not suspect any one?"

She hesitated, and I saw that she did. Here was my first clew. I was convinced of that, and so I pressed the point.

"Well, I do not know. A lady—an American lady—has called several times at my place of business and given large orders, all of which have been executed and duly paid for. Still I doubt her."

"Good! Now the name of this lady whom you suspect of complicity with your husband?"

"I said not complicity. I do not know even if he knows her."

"Then why do you suspect her?"

"Because she is always trying to be invited to my house, and has several times invited me to hers; but I have a dread of the woman. Miss Lydia Lightfoot is her name. She writes such gushing letters!"

"Oh, you have some letters?"

"Her excuse for desiring this friendship is that she has no friends in England."

"Can you let me see a letter?" She drew one from her pocket and I compared it with the anonymous letter and the forged bills. Certainly there was not a bit of resemblance in them. So there was no clew.

"May I mutilate this letter?"

"Yes."

I carefully cut off the signature, then divided the sheet of note-paper so that the address was gone, and then handed the fragment back to Mrs. Lytton, telling her to drop it carelessly in some place where her husband could find it, and see if he appeared to recognize the writing. If he did, and demanded to know who the writer was, she was to say an old school-fellow who had gone abroad.

She left, but the next morning she was in my office again. The bait had taken. He had found the piece of letter, and had at first seemed greatly startled, not to say annoyed. He had asked who the writer was, and having received the answer I had instructed to be given had carelessly muttered something about "girls write much rot," tore the letter up, and threw the pieces away.

"Your suspicions were right. This lady is the anonymous letter-writer—or, rather, the cause of its being written. You must ask her to dine with you to-day."

And so the arrangement was made, and in the evening I found myself at Mrs. Lytton's and was introduced to her husband, a handsome fellow, but with an unpleasant look in the eyes. But what struck me most was that I had seen him somewhere before, but where I could not tell.

Presently Miss Lydia Lightfoot arrived—a beautiful woman—dressed in the height of fashion. Mrs. Lytton at once introduced her to Mr. Lytton, and I watched the introduction from the conservatory.

George Lytton turned deadly pale, but Miss Lightfoot was

perfectly calm. Still, I saw enough to make me believe that they knew each other.

The dinner was a quiet one, and during its course I found an opportunity to ask Mr. Lytton if he were American born.

"I guess so," he answered. "I hail from Boston."

After dinner I strolled into the garden, as I thought to myself:

"The fellow is a cad and a rogue. Mrs. Lytton was quite right, and I will find out the mystery. By jove, here comes the charming Miss Lightfoot! Why, she is going straight to Lytton! I must know what this is about."

I left the path, and treading softly on the turf, managed to creep up to some bushes which were behind the seat on which George Lytton was, and from this place I could see and hear all that passed without being seen.

"You are alone, George?" she said.

"Yes, you see I am. What do you want here, Maud Cameron?"

"What I thought would have been the last thing I should want—justice."

"Bah! Don't speak in riddles, but out with the truth."

"Then let me sit down by your side and listen patiently. You had better, and so I warn you. You know me, and I tell you, Tom Ingledew, that I'd drop a bullet into a man who offended me, as freely in this country as I would at 'Frisco—although there ain't any freedom here."

Tom Ingledew! I knew the fellow. He was the man suspected of having committed the forgeries of which Captain Fairlight was accused.

"I know you, and I will listen."

"Well, when you came down to Sacramento with Handsome Charlie Cameron, as we used to call him, you put up at my father's hotel and did the bounce. You made love to me, but I took to Charlie, and we married."

"I know that. You jilted me?"

"Nothing of the kind. I told you straight out I loved Charlie. Still you kept on at the hotel until you had spent all your money, drinking and gambling—"

"You need not remind me of the fool that I made of myself."

"Perhaps not. Then my husband, Charlie, told my father and myself all your history."

"Curse him!"

"Hold on there! I won't have Charlie cursed. Well, time went on, and the hotel came to smash. So we all went up to the mines of Nevada. You would do but little work, but we all worked hard and made a good pile, and back we came to Sacramento."

"Then Charlie found out that Captain Fairlight, whose name you had forged, was dead, and that his daughter had—then a widow—gone into business and made a fortune—a big one. So Charlie hit upon the plan that you should come over here and pretend to be a mercantile traveler. You were to consign us goods; we would pay for them regularly for some time, and then you were to forge bills on her, get a tremendous lot of goods on credit and then be off."

"The greater part of the agreement I kept."

"No, you didn't. You snapped up the widow and stopped the speculation."

"Be not impatient," the wretched man pleaded, as she rose from the seat. "Let us take a walk round the grounds. You used to be quick enough, Maud, in hitting out spots. If you can think of any feasible plan, I'll do it; for, to tell you the truth, I am sick of this tiger-cat. I never look at her but I feel like a mouse before a cat. I wish I could take all her money and leave her penniless. Come, let us walk."

I saw the two walk away, and then I slipped back to the house, where I knew Mrs. Lytton awaited me.

I told her all. She was calm—terribly calm, and then, when she had heard everything, she said:

"Mr. Gerval, you must not leave this house to-night."

She conducted me to a small room, comfortably furnished, where she asked me to remain.

"That door," she said, pointing to a little side door, "leads into my boudoir. Stay; I'll lock it on this side. You can lock your own door. Listen to all that passes."

The next moment she had gone and I was alone.

I heard her enter her boudoir and ring for her maid, whom she desired to tell Miss Lightfoot that as Mrs. Lytton did not feel well she had retired to her boudoir, where she would be glad to see her guest.

But I had not long to think, for Miss Lightfoot came tripping up the stairs humming a tune.

"My dear Mrs. Lytton, you distress me by this sudden illness. Is it a headache?"

"I have received a number of anonymous letters concerning my husband. Where did they come from? Speak truly, and I will not only prevent you and your husband being punished, but I will reward you."

"Well, then, as the game is up, I may as well round on Tom Ingledew. The cur would split upon us, I know. Those letters were written by my instructions. We believed that you would show them to your husband and help us to intimidate him."

"And the forged bills?"

"Oh, he stood in with them!" and here, with the greatest coolness, the woman related the different plots which Tom Ingledew had planned and performed.

"Enough—enough!" said Mrs. Lytton, with evident disgust. "Here is money for you. Bah! I hear the fellow's footsteps on the stairs. Go! Take care he does not see you. Remember, you must leave England, never to return."

She had gone, and presently I heard Mr. Lytton, who had gone into the library, coming hastily upstairs.

"What is the meaning of this, madam? Where are the guests gone?"

"I dismissed them."

"Am I not your husband?"

"Unfortunately, yes, but not my master, Thomas Ingledew."

"By heaven, I'll kill you!" he cried, clinching his fist as if to strike her.

"Be warned. I am not unprotected. A detective is here."

"A detective!" he gasped. "Has that woman—Miss Lightfoot—"

"Call her by her proper name—Mrs. Cameron. She has confessed and gone. I let her go, for I knew all before."

"It's a lie—a plant. I do not believe—"

"Hold!" She crossed to the door of my room and tapped. "Mr. Gerval, come in."

"It's all up, Tom Ingledew," I said. "I heard all your conversation with Mrs. Cameron. You are done for."

But Mrs. Lytton did not care to have her name dragged into the papers; but the punishment she inflicted on the unhappy wretch was almost worse than imprisonment—at least I should think so."

He had to write a full confession, and freeing his wife from all claim; then he had to write an apology so abject that I could scarcely have believed a man could do it, and to undertake to leave England forever.

I took the fellow by the arm and conducted him downstairs. He put on his hat and coat, and then I took him to the street door.

The night was dark, foggy and nasty. I shall never forget the hopeless look that this miserable coward cast around him. Then he rushed into the darkness, and that was the last I saw of the Strange Customer.

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